



Presents



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WEEK 6: Experiences

God is omnipresent, meaning He is everywhere at all times: past, present, and future. Because of this unique characteristic, He sees every event in your life. There is absolutely nothing catching God by surprise. In fact, God combines every one of our life experiences, and incorporates them masterfully into the grand design of His grand narrative, His story, His purpose and plan.

Consider the following Scripture: *“And we know [with great confidence] that God [who is deeply concerned about us] causes all things to work together [as a plan] for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to His plan and purpose”* (Romans 8:28 AMP).

Discussion 1: Think about your daily routines as well as major life transitions. How has God used these in order to bring you to the place you are today?

Definition: Experiences: things encountered and interacted with that shape you.

The Originator: Everyone has faced challenges, overcome obstacles, or has come in second or third place, or last. You may have spilled milk as a child or tied shoelaces into a knot. Did God really do that? You know, God has a way of using even the most insignificant events and experiences to mold, make, and shape you; to give you a story. He also uses major events to position you for His purpose.

Think about your relationship with God. What were you going through when you were first introduced to the Lord? What did you think when you first heard the Gospel message (the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus)? How did you relate to the Creation of all things in the book of Genesis?

He existed before anything else, and He holds all creation together. (Colossians 1:17 NLT)

God is involved in the microscopic details and the universal constructs of everything. He made you in His own image and likeness--a masterpiece--and is holding all things together: your past, present, and future.

The Past: Only God can take a mess or a miss, and turn it into a masterpiece. After rising to the top position in Egypt, Joseph was able to put into perspective the betrayal of his brothers, his forced servitude, his prison sentencing, and the forgetfulness of a so-called friend, and conclude God's sovereign hand. He said to his brothers, *“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives”* (Genesis 50:20 NIV).

Every experience fits into the tapestry of your life. Every thread has been carefully woven into the fabric. On the outward is a beautiful image God is displaying. On the backside are the frays, strands and threads taped and knotted. Both front and back are important parts of your story. There is nothing you can do to change what is behind you, but know these experiences have contributed to who you are today.

The Present: God provides a fresh start every morning just for you. Today, you know more about your SHAPE than ever before. You know how and what God has invested in you, the ingredients: Spiritual Gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experiences. Pause and reflect on these for a moment.

Your experiences can be expressed in the following ways:

- Personally – awards and accolades
- Vocationally – ladder of success
- Relationally – familial, friendships, fellowship
- Educationally – academics and trainings
- Spiritually – your walk with God

Discussion 2: Take a brief inventory of your SHAPE. How are your SHAPE elements expressed in your interaction with people and with things you encounter?

What About Pains? It is always nice to talk about and reflect on the good things and great times: birthdays, weddings, holidays, new babies, graduations, new jobs, promotions, retirements, friendships, and more. God divinely uses the good as well as the difficult and painful experiences. Maybe you have gone through a bad divorce, suffered abuse, lost a loved one, struggled with alcoholism, been diagnosed with cancer or other disease, lost a job, had a miscarriage, or have been victimized. God was with you during the pain-filled times, and He is with you today.

The Orchestrator: Your future is in good hands. God is the only One who can take a past such as yours, combine it with your present, and orchestrate a favorable future. But how does God use those unfavorable experiences *for good*? The answer is, He uses **you**.

Now is the time to give Him all of the pain and shame and guilt of the past, and place them in His hands. Allow Him to shape them into something useful. The good comes when you share your experiences with others. Your past crisis can become the rescue for someone else. What are you willing to give to Him, so that He can give unto others the healing and resolve they need through your experiences?

Discussion 3: Share how God has used a painful experience to help someone else.

MY EXPERIENCES

Respond below what you believe God is releasing you to share with others.

My positive experiences include:

Therefore, I can help others in this area:

My painful experiences include:

Therefore, I can help others in this area: