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Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God Pt. 3 God Invites You to Become Involved with Him in His Work “The Fine Art of RSVPing”

by Matthew J. Hook

Samantha Bennett of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette writes that “Reports are pouring in from the aftermath of the holiday season, and it's official: Ignored Invitation Syndrome is an epidemic. Sure, we can scoff at old-school etiquette about salad forks and fish knives and mutton squeezers. Many of us are lucky to have plates that match and something inoffensive to put on them.

But fundamental manners, starting with saying "please," "thank you," "excuse me" or "I'm so sorry I've crushed your mums," exist for a reason. The main purpose of polite behavior is to preserve people's comfort: To avoid hurting their feelings or causing them inconvenience or embarrassment.

Instead of "I already have one of those," you say, "What a lovely and thoughtful gift! One can never have too many air horns!" Instead of, "No, Mrs. Narwhal, I did not have a good time," you say, "It was a delightful party, and I found the ritual torture very engaging!" Instead of, "Like the side of a barn," you say, "No, it doesn't make your rear end look big at all!" It is polite to shield people from embarrassment. One pretends not to have heard bodily eruptions that set off car alarms. One avoids remarking on nasal exploration or unfortunate stains.

And it is every decent person's duty, for the good of the fabric of society and the peaceful perpetuation of every kind of event from birthday parties and pot lucks to wedding receptions and debutant balls, **TO FOR PETE'S SAKE TELL THE HOSTESS WHETHER OR NOT YOU WILL ATTEND.** This is the function of R.S.V.P., which means "Repondez, s'il vous plait," which means in English "Let us know so we can order the deli trays."

Unfortunately, the lack of an engraved invitation with a stamped R.S.V.P. card indicates to many people that they don't have to commit to any event, ever. The current practice is to respond with "Yeah, I might drop by." As a hostess, that would make me want to say, "Yeah, and I might have some food for you."

Of course, you may be holding out for a better offer. The glory of etiquette is that you can do that, as long as you don't admit it's what you're doing. But there's a limit. You can plausibly say you have to check with your parole officer, but you have to deliver a yes or no before party time.

It's rude to punish the host for inviting you by making him or her guess how much food to buy, how much booze, how many party hats. Finally, on party night, there is a fridge stuffed with three hams, a chocolate fountain and a case of beer -- for four people.

This is why I don't have parties. I had a few bad experiences with "I might drop by's, so I save myself the aggravation, by buying a chocolate fountain and a straw...for myself.

But I tell my angry hostess friends, who spend time making special dishes for the vegetarians, dieters and fussy eaters only to have them go directly into Tupperware, that there is a solution. Don't invite them again. People who can't treat an invitation with respect don't deserve one. That leaves all the more for me." That's the fine art of RSVPing. Even "evites", the web-based RSVP service isn't failsafe.

The fact is: If you want to experience God, you must know that God is inviting you to become involved with Him in His work. If God is always at work around you, and if God is pursuing a love relationship with you that is real and personal, and God invites you to become involved with Him in his work, then what's the problem? Why don't we respond? Why don't we RSVP? Several reasons:

1. Fear (I don't want God to turn me into something I'm not, when in reality God will turn you into your truest self and use you to impact the world around you.)
2. Ignorance/Misunderstanding (Being a servant sounds like a drag. Most people don't know Jesus described heaven more as a party or banquet than anything else!)
3. Waiting for a better offer. It's true you don't know what the future holds. (But never be afraid to trust an unknown future to God known in Jesus Christ)
4. Procrastination (We get stuck doing so many worthless things that have no long-lasting impact. We get sidetracked. Aren't you tired of it? Try doing something Kingdom-related for Christ!)
5. Feel inadequate (I don't deserve this party. And that's the point. This is a come-as-you-are party)
6. We're too busy! (Those folks who do more and accomplish less and really miss out!)
7. You don't know the host well enough (And for that, there's nothing to say but "Will you open yourself up enough to trust Him a little?" Can you hand Him the small stuff? He'll take care of the big things too. And the more you come to know him and his faithfulness, the more willing you'll be to trust him with more and more, as he accomplishes his work through you!)

Each of these common reasons is based on misinformation.

If you want to experience God, you must submit to being God's servant.

Phil. 2:5-8 *"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!"*

Matthew 20:26-28 *"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

John 20:21 *"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."*

You and I are being invited right now to be God's servant, involved with Him in His work. But be careful: the world says a servant is one who finds what the master wants him or her to do, and then goes off and does it. But this is not a biblical concept of servant. The Biblical view of servanthood is like the Potter and the Clay in Jer. 18.

Jer. 18:1-6 *"This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 'Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message.' So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him."*

Then the word of the Lord came to me: ‘O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?’ declares the Lord. ‘Like clay in hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.’”

We’re to be like clay. The clay has to do two things:

1. The clay has to be molded. The clay has to be responsive to the potter, so the potter can make any instrument of his choosing.
2. The clay has to remain in the potter’s hand. When the potter has finished making the instrument of his choosing, that instrument has no ability to do anything whatsoever. It now has to remain in the potter’s hand.

When you come to God as His servant, He first wants you to allow Him to mold and shape you into the instrument of His choosing. Then He can take your life and put it where He wills and work through it to accomplish His purposes. Just like a cup cannot do anything on its own, you do not have any ability to do the command of the Lord except to be where He wants you to be. Jesus Himself said *“The Son can do nothing by himself”* (John 5:19), and he said *“I am the vine, you are the branches. If someone remains in me and I in him or her, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing”* (John 15:5).

Initially that sounds stifling. But think about this: With God working through you as His servant, you can do anything God can do. (let me say that again). Talk about a wide open door of opportunity! It’s anything but stifling; although servanthood does require obedience. You as God’s servant must do what is instructed, and remember who is accomplishing the work—God is. God didn’t remain in the burning bush. He went with Moses down to Egypt and led him to free the Hebrew slaves.

If you feel weak, limited, and ordinary, you are the best material through which God can work. An ordinary person is who God *most* likes to use. Paul said God deliberately seeks out the weak things and the despised things because it is from them that He can receive the greatest glory (1 Cor. 1:27-29). 1:27 *“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things-- and the things that are not-- to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him.”* Then everyone will know that only God could have done it.

God’s invitation is not a sign and not a formula, it’s a relationship. Your relationship is the key to knowing God’s voice. What are you dealing with today? Do you need to hear God’s voice? You might pray God gives you a sign; but a sign is a passing thing. Lot’s of folks asked Jesus for a miraculous sign, and Jesus called them a *“wicked and adulterous generation”* (Matthew 12:38-39). God’s invitation is not a formula either. The Pharisees thought they had it down, like a formula. But God does not want you to become an expert at using a formula. He wants an intimate love relationship with you. That’s all he wants. You He wants you to depend upon Him alone. What ever you face, God invites you to trust Him. To stay involved with Him. He says *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness”* 2 Cor. 12:9. That’s God’s voice and it comes through relationship.

Another big problem with RSVPs is we procrastinate. We don’t answer immediately. It’s the same with God’s invitation. God’s design is that you and I respond in the moment. It might be an idea you have, or something you read in His Word, an opportunity, or a decision you make. The moment God speaks to you is the very moment God wants you to respond to Him. The moment God invites you to become involved with Him in His work is God’s timing. That’s why He chooses

to speak when He does. The problem is we procrastinate. We say “Let’s pray about that one…”

One of my greatest experiences with God was through a little 2 year old girl from Guyana, who just happened to be born with her bladder on the outside of her body. I received the phone call that she was coming in 2 weeks. I didn’t know what it was going to be like, but knew “of course it’s God’s will to love and care for a little girl that God wanted to heal.” All she could give was smiles, yet baby Sarah had an impact on me, Leigh, my family, our church, the schools, the medical people, and even our neighbors who aren’t so sure about this Jesus-stuff. It was just a moment. Had Leigh and I said “Well, we really should pray about it; we’re not prepared; we haven’t had training with special needs babies” we’d have missed the moment and missed experiencing God in a profound way. Remember the moment God speaks to you is the very moment God wants you to respond to Him.

If you can’t be faithful in a little, God will not give you the larger assignment. He may want to adjust your life and grow your character in smaller assignments in order to prepare you for the larger ones. That is where God starts to work. When you make the adjustments and start to obey Him, you come to know Him by experience. **This is the goal of God’s activity in your life—that you come to KNOW Him.** Do you want to experience God mightily working in your life and through your life? Then adjust your life to God in the kind of relationship where you follow Him wherever He leads you—even if the assignment seems to be small or insignificant.

We all remember “*Well done, good and faithful servant.*” But we don’t remember the whole verse: “*Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!*” Matthew 25:21.

I think by his words, Jesus is telling us: **Dream big.** With God working through you as His servant, you can do anything God can do. **Accept God’s invitation the moment you sense Him.** That IS your encounter with God. And **stick with it until it’s completed!** When God speaks, He stands to guarantee that it will come to pass. And you will experience God like never before. RSVP. Respond for heaven’s sake. Aren’t you tired of holding out for something better when nothing comes along? You’re invited! Don’t you hate to miss a good party?