

Going on a
God Hunt 

Sermon 1
The God Hunt



GOING ON A GOD HUNT

Sermon 1 of 4:

THE GOD HUNT

By Dr. David R. Mains



Key Sentence: Going on a daily God Hunt will help you find Him in your everyday world.

Text: Genesis 24

(Note: ► icon means "Next Slide," indicating when to advance to the next slide.)

Loser had lots of friends who liked him. He was good at sports, and his mother continually reminded him that the teacher had said he showed "promise."

Loser's big problem was that he kept losing things. At last count, he had lost three pairs of gym shoes, a soccer ball, a catcher's mitt, several math books, hundreds of pencils, one bag of trick-or-treat candy, assorted hats and gloves, one Sunday shoe (the other one showed up under his bed), homework, four library books, a tennis racket, and his father's pocket calculator.

I want to start off this morning by telling a story from the book called *I Spy God – A God Hunt Book for Kids*, written by Karen Mains.

"Loser," said his mother. "You know I love you, but sometimes you're a trial." She said this after Loser couldn't remember where he had left his birthday present, a shiny new mountain bike.

"Losing things is troublesome, Son," said his father. "If you're going to become a man, you have to take responsibility for yourself. Men can't go around losing things."

His father said this after Loser had lost two tennis balls in the long grass near the tennis courts and after he couldn't remember where he had left the tennis racket. (It was his father's racket.)

"Well, try to remember where you left your homework," said Ms. Henshaw, his teacher, with a sigh. Ms. Henshaw sighed a lot when Loser was around.

But all the thinking in the world never seemed to do any good. Loser just couldn't remember. He didn't know how he lost things. He would go to school with his lunch bag, sit down for a moment, but when he'd turn around his lunch bag would be gone. Or he'd remember it was gone when it was time to go to the lunchroom.

"Oh, he'll grow out of it," said his grandma. "He's still just a boy."

"Don't worry so much," said his grandpa. "When he wants to find something badly enough, he'll find it."

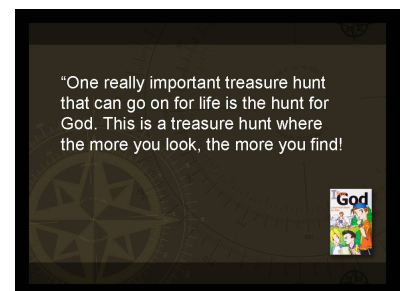
Loser's grandpa was right. But to tell you how would be to get ahead of the story.

I've been reading from **||▶ I Spy God – A God Hunt Book for Kids**. It's by multiple award-winning author Karen Mains. Not only is it a delightful tale of Loser eventually searching very hard for something quite important to him, but the booklet helps children look for God in their everyday lives, which is an important practice for adults as well as children.

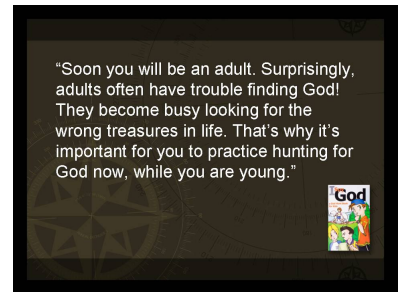


Listen to these words from page 14:

||▶ One really important treasure hunt that can go on for life is the hunt for God. This is a treasure hunt where the more you look, the more you find!



||▶ *Soon you will be an adult. Surprisingly, adults often have trouble finding God! They become busy looking for the wrong treasures in life. That's why it's important for you to practice hunting for God now, while you are young.*



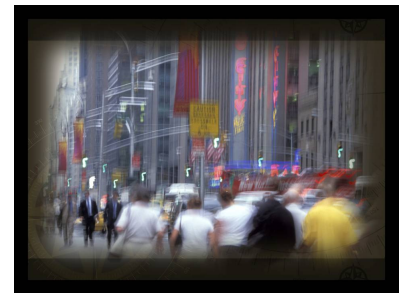
[Note: If you have a book table, use the following paragraph. Otherwise skip it.]

These I Spy God books are available in (place) for only \$_____. You will also find God Hunt Field Journals there in which grownups learn to track God's activity in their everyday worlds. More about those later.

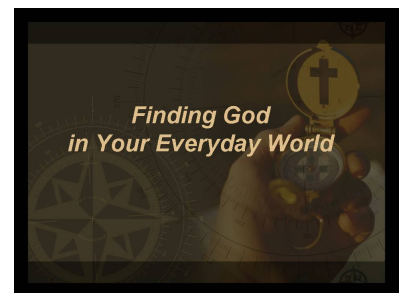
Did you identify at all with the sentence I read a minute ago about adults often having trouble finding God in their everyday lives? The truth is, this is a common problem. Busy lives keep our minds occupied with all kinds of thoughts, but not many or those thoughts are God-related. It's not that we want it this way. It just happens!

||▶ Even people who are well disciplined in terms of daily Bible study and prayer will admit that it's hard to stay God-focused once you've left the quiet of your time alone with the Lord.

This is a culture that almost screams at you for attention with all the ads, the phones, the all-too-convenient media outlets—the noise.



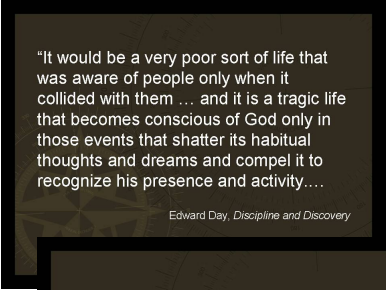
||▶ For the next four weeks I want to address this issue of finding God in your everyday world. That's my subject, and my prediction is that by the end of this series most of you will not only say you're getting good at finding God in your everyday world, but in the process you'll have a lot of fun. This bold prediction of mine will be true for children as well



as adults. In fact, there's a good chance that the younger ones in our congregation will outshine those of us who are older when it comes to finding God in our every-day.

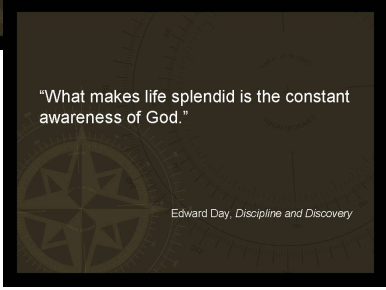
In his book *Discipline and Discovery*, Edward Day writes,

▶ “It would be a very poor sort of life that was aware of people only when it collided with them ... and it is a tragic life that becomes conscious of God only in those events that shatter its habitual thoughts and dreams and compel it to recognize his presence and activity. ▶ What makes life splendid is the constant awareness of God.”



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Edward Day, *Discipline and Discovery*



“What makes life splendid is the constant awareness of God.”

Edward Day, *Discipline and Discovery*

What we're going to do, to tap into that constant awareness, is to learn to go on a daily God Hunt.

“What's that?” you ask.

Simply defined, the God Hunt is choosing to recognize God anytime he intervenes in our everyday life.

The aptitude for hunting for and finding God is native to every human heart, but as we mature we often lose or neglect the capacity to do so. We only become intent on finding him when terror is nearby, when sadness insists on keeping company, or when pain becomes a relentless stalker.

Instead, let's begin the God Hunt as a game of hide-and-seek – in a childlike way, with laughter and delight.

▶ Here are four categories where people are to look for God's interventions, and these are what we will be covering in the next weeks:

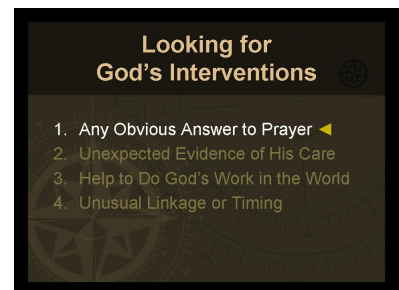
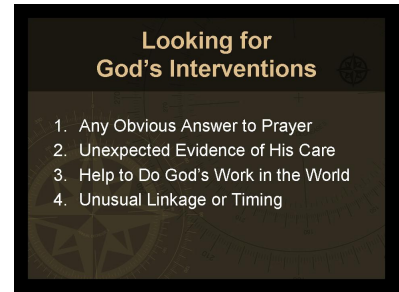
- ▶ *Any Obvious Answer to Prayer.*
- ▶ *Unexpected Evidence of His Care.*
- ▶ *Help to do God's Work in the World, and*
- ▶ *Unusual Linkage or Timing.*

▶ Today we will look at the first one – *Any Obvious Answer to Prayer.*

In Genesis chapter 24 is a delightful eHarmony type of story. Abraham's chief servant has been sent on an important but difficult mission. He's commissioned by his master to find a bride for Isaac, the son of Abraham's old age.

I don't know if you've ever tried to suggest who would be a good marriage partner for a son or daughter or close friend, but it's not exactly the easiest of assignments. On top of that, this poor fellow has to travel to another land to find this special young lady. Thinking about it further, he asks, "Hey, what if the woman is unwilling to come back with me?"

▶ Packing up all kinds of expensive gifts onto ten camels he reluctantly sets out on his adventure. Arriving in the part of this unknown world where he's been sent, he utters this conversational prayer, "O Lord, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master. See, I'm standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. And because I'm not



very good at this kind of thing, may it be that, ah, when I say to a young woman, “Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,” and she says, ‘Drink, and I’ll also water your camels’ – well, let her be the one you have chosen for Isaac. And if all this happens I’ll also know that you have shown kindness to my master.”

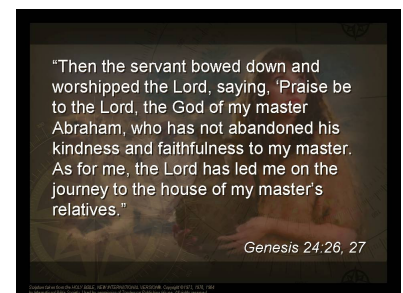
Now note these next words, “Before he had finished praying” ...He hadn’t even said “In Jehovah’s name, Amen,” yet scripture reports that “Rebekah came with her jar on her shoulder. She was a relative of Abraham’s and a very beautiful virgin.”

Our servant hurried to meet her nervously saying, “Please give me a little water from your jar,” which she did and immediately said the magic words, “I’ll draw water for your camel’s too!”

At that point the chief servant kind of gulped and said to himself, “I wonder if that was an answer to my prayer.” That’s not actually what the Bible records. But its how we sometimes act, isn’t it? Nonetheless, this man knew that something amazing and wonderful had just taken place. The God of the universe had just invaded his everyday world!

Listen to verses 26 and 27,

▶ *Then the servant bowed down and worshipped the Lord, saying, ‘Praise be to the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master. As for me, the Lord has led me on the journey to the house of my master’s relatives.*

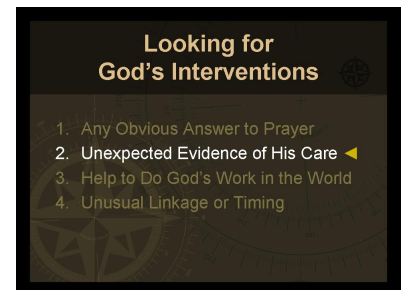


So he knows this is something special. It’s not of his own doing. God has been involved, and to be the recipient of the Almighty’s favor is a high honor indeed.

This Genesis scripture is rather unusual in that all four of the God Hunt categories I mentioned earlier are covered. This doesn't happen all that often.

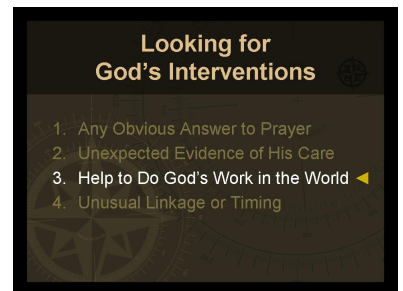
For example, number 2 was

▶▶ *Unexpected Evidence of God's Care*. How fortunate that the wife hunt didn't take years and hundreds of interviews. Has God ever gone out of His way to show that He cares for you? If you can identify such a situation, you have had a God Hunt sighting.



Number 3 is

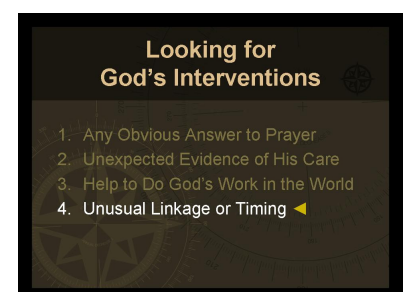
▶▶ *Help to do God's Work in the World*. In a very real sense this was God's assignment to Abraham's servant as much as it was from Abraham. And the Lord was obviously there to help his servant out.



Let me put this *Help to do God's Work in the World* category into everyday terms. You've made a meatloaf which turns out to be more than what your family needs. "Oh" you figure, "I'll divide it and put half in the freezer for later." No sooner is the decision made than your phone rings. It's the church office on the line. Seems a family is going through a hard time and could you possibly provide a meal sometime this week? Putting two and two together you respond, "It's no problem at all. I'll take tonight." And you laugh to yourself because you have just partnered with God in His work, and it's always fun to partner with God!

Similarly, Abraham's servant found himself partnering with God to do God's work in the world.

Number 4 was ▶▶ *Unusual Linkage or Timing*. What kind of master planner did it take for Abraham's servant to



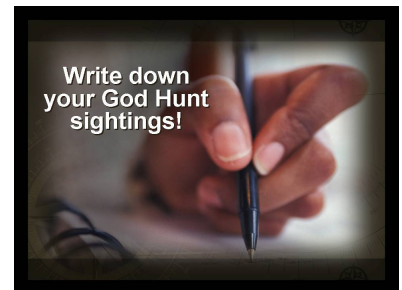
arrive outside the city of Nahor just as the women were coming out to draw water in the evening? What kind of arranging did it take for Rebekah to be the first to draw water at the well? And so on ...

Linkage and timing are a set of circumstances that mesh together for our good in an amazing way and to which humans usually exclaim, 'What a coincidence!' But it is not a coincidence; it is God working on our behalf.

The secret to getting good at this game and keeping the sense of God's presence in your life is to look everyday for where God might have shown up. This could be in large matters that one would have to be spiritually blind to miss, or in a myriad of small ways that it sometimes takes a minute of reflection at the end of your day to catch.

For newcomers to this exercise it might take you a short while to develop a proficiency for noticing God's presence. For those who have been at it for years, seldom will a day go by when you're not aware of God in some way involving Himself in your world. Sound too good to be true? It's not really!

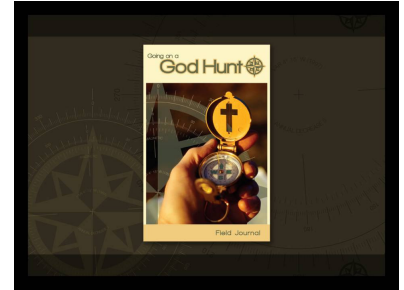
||▶ Here's a very important point: Whenever you have an "I spy" or a "God Hunt Sighting", it's extremely important that you write it down. If you don't, it won't receive the attention it deserves. Worse than that, you won't remember it for very long. Special encounters will pass you by like nothing happened. You'll say "What a coincidence!" and that will be it.



Why are we able to enjoy the account of Abraham's servant in Genesis 24?
Because somebody wrote it down!

"Where do I write these down?" you ask.

▶ In a *God Hunt Field Journal*. (HOLD UP A *God Hunt Field journal*.)



This little booklet has some 50 pages for you to make entries. The top of the page is for your prayer requests. Like, “I don’t know how to pick out a bride for my master’s son, God. I need your help!” So Abraham’s servant could have just filled in his request in the space under the words. “God, I need to see you intervening in my world by dot, dot, dot.”

The rest of the page is for your sightings—your obvious answers to prayer, your unexpected evidence of His care, help to do God’s work in the world, and any unusual linkage or timing.

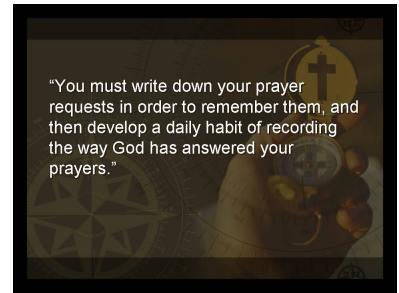
“Why over 50 pages?” you wonder. Because it takes about that long to establish a habit. Make this little booklet your companion piece for the next 50 days and I can almost guarantee that you will establish the good spiritual habit in your life of going on the daily God Hunt.

These booklets are available in _____ . Interspersed in the pages you will find testimonies of people like you who learned to recognize the hand of God in their lives. There are also good reminder verses from scripture such as Matthew 1:23 “And he will be called Immanuel (meaning God is with us).”

Listen to these words from the introduction pages to this God Hunt Field Journal:

Why is it important to use a journal? Because you will not remember if you do not begin to keep a lasting record. The tendency of all humans is to forget. We pray. We plead. We call on God with our requests. God answers. He performs miracles. The supernatural intersects with the natural and we stand around pondering, “Hmmm. What happened here?”

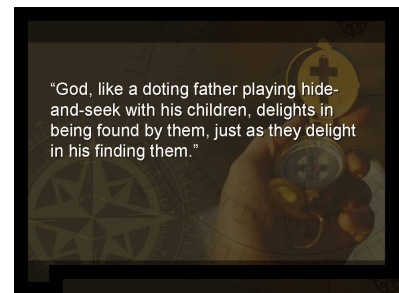
▶ *You must write down your prayer requests in order to remember them, and then develop a daily habit of recording the way God has answered your prayers.*



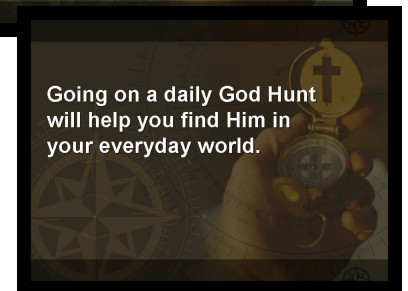
This God Hunt Field Journal will help you to make the spiritual concrete and recognizable. Your list of God Hunt Sightings will grow, and if you develop the discipline to add to it over the days, the weeks, the months, and the years of your life, you will have a remarkable written testament of the personal and intimate work of God in your own world. No matter how difficult times become, terror or pain or loss will not be able to convince you that God doesn't care. Here is your record of the way you saw God.

The other thing you will begin to sense as you keep this God Hunt Field journal is that God is drawing you to himself, attempting to show you his daily work, whispering to your soul, hoping you will develop that familiar intimacy.

▶ *God, like a doting father playing hide-and-seek with his children, delights in being found by them, just as they delight in his finding them.*



What I'm saying to you, reduced to a simple sentence, sounds like this: ▶ *Going on a daily God Hunt will help you find Him in your everyday world.* In my key sentence that "Him" has a capital "H" because it refers to God. Once again, *going on a daily God Hunt will help you find Him in your everyday world.*



Now, do you have to carry this little booklet with you all day long so the instant you have an obvious answer to prayer you whip it out and write in it? Not really, although it could easily fit in a purse, or a briefcase, a backpack or lunch box.

The response you would most probably expect, however, is for me to say to keep it by your Bible. Then set a time, say each evening, when you purposely reflect back on your day and can write down your observations.

I think of this as kind of an end of the day replay. It doesn't have to take a lot of time, but I just kind of do a mental run through the day. It started this way, then I worked on such and such, got this phone call, met the deadline on a given project and so on. Quite often in this reviewing process the Lord will remind me of a special role he played, like ...

"I was nervous because I didn't know how I was going to juggle things around the noon hour, and then Joel called and wondered if he could put off our lunch for a couple of days, and that just freed up the log jam. Thank you Jesus." This is unexpected evidence of His care – write it down.

"What if it wasn't Jesus?" you ask. "It really was a coincidence."

I don't worry about it. I figure there are so many times when the Lord didn't get the credit he deserved, if this wasn't his doing, well it evens things out some! Besides, as someone once said, it may be just another coincidence, but these seem to happen more often when I pray.

I guess I never did finish the story of Abraham's servant, did I? Let me read Genesis 24, verses 53 through to the end of the chapter:

||▶ *Then the servant brought out gold and silver jewelry and articles of clothing and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave costly gifts to her brother and to her mother. Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night there.*



When they got up the next morning, he said, "Send me on my way to my master."

But her brother and her mother replied, "Let the girl remain with us ten days or so; then you may go."

But he said to them, "Do not detain me, now that the LORD has granted success to my journey. Send me on my way so I may go to my master."

Then they said, "Let's call the girl and ask her about it." So they called Rebekah and asked her, "Will you go with this man?"

"I will go," she said.

So they sent their sister Rebekah on her way, along with her nurse and Abraham's servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekah and said to her,

*Our sister, may you increase
to thousands upon thousands;
may your offspring possess
the gates of their enemies.*

Then Rebekah and her maids got ready and mounted their camels and went back with the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left.

Now Isaac had come from Beer Lahai Roi, for he was living in the Negev. He went out to the field one evening to meditate, and as he looked up, he saw camels approaching. Rebekah also looked up and saw Isaac. She got down from her camel and asked the servant, "Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?"

“He is my master,” the servant answered. So she took her veil and covered herself.

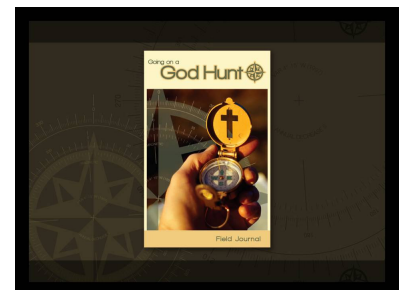
Then the servant told Isaac all he had done. Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her.

So, it sounds like Isaac also had a special God Hunt Sighting to write in his journal, as did Rebekah in hers, plus old Abraham as well.

The big question, of course, is whether or not you will be someone who goes on the God Hunt. I’m wondering how you are responding to the idea of looking for God in your everyday world.

Don’t be like Loser in the children’s story many of you will be reading to your young sons and daughters. Remember his grandma saying, “Oh, he’ll grow out of it.” Well, unfortunately, you won’t “grow out of” losing track of God’s presence in your everyday. Someday you will need to learn how to successfully hunt for Him. And what better time to discover how to do that than now, when our whole church is focused on accomplishing this?

▶ That’s why one of the first steps you may want to take is to get a God Hunt Field journal. Granted, you can write down your “I Spy’s” in whatever you want. But this is a great choice if you want to feel like you’re a part of what we’re about as a congregation. Again, you can get one at (place) for \$(price).



▶ I don’t believe Abraham’s servant was as much a man of faith as Abraham was. Nevertheless, God made his presence known to him in a most remarkable way. And you



may picture yourself as far removed from ever being classified as a great hero of the church. But that doesn't mean the Lord's involvements in your life have to be few and far between. Discover the truth of what I have just told you by joining with us in the God Hunt this coming week and all this month. Then next week we will rejoice in what the Lord is already doing, and together examine additional ways to notice his involvement in our everyday worlds.

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