WEEK 1 — God Is Already at Work

January 10 — Deacon Ordination Sunday • John 5:17–20

MAIN POINT

God's work begins with God, not me.

Aim: Help people recognize God's initiative and look for where they can join Him rather than simply ask Him to bless their own plans.

Primary NT: John 5:17–20

Supporting NT: Philippians 1:6; Philippians 2:13; Romans 8:28

Key Doctrine: Providence and divine initiative

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use these questions and illustrations to introduce the topic and surface lived experience.

When you ask, "What is God's will for my life?" what are you really hoping God will do for you? Jesus starts not with my plans but with the Father's ongoing work.

Transition: Read the New Testament passage before turning to the Moses illustration.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says and what it means. Read the assigned passage before offering interpretation.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 5:17–20.

- What does Jesus say the Father is doing?
- What can the Son do by Himself?
- What determines Jesus' activity?
- What does the Father show the Son?

Movement 1 — God is already working

Connect: John 5:17; Romans 8:28

God is not absent simply because we cannot see His activity. Israel's rescue began with God, not Moses.

Apply: Where do you see signs of God's work in people and relationships?

Leader explanation: John 5:17–20 unfolds in the context of a Sabbath controversy following Jesus' healing of a disabled man. Jesus' statement about His Father working is not a generic encouragement to stay busy; it is a claim about the Father's ongoing work and the Son's unique relationship to Him.

Moses illustration: Exodus 2–3: God responded to Israel's suffering before Moses understood what was happening.

Movement 2 — Dependence precedes participation

Connect: John 5:19–20; Philippians 2:13

Jesus models perfect dependence on the Father.

Apply: Where have you been running ahead of God?

Leader explanation: Jesus' statement that the Son does nothing "of his own accord" expresses perfect unity with the Father, not lack of divine power. The Son sees and does what the Father does. Believers imitate His humble obedience analogically; we do not have His unique divine knowledge.

Movement 3 — God finishes what He begins

Connect: Philippians 1:6

God carries His purposes forward, freeing us from thinking everything depends on us. Deacons serve where God is working among His people.

Apply: What faithful act of service is already in front of you?

Leader explanation: Philippians 2:13 underscores that God is at work in His people to shape both desire and action. Philippians 1:6 assures believers of God's persevering grace. Romans 8:28 speaks of God's purpose for those who love Him, not a promise that every circumstance will feel good.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- According to John 5, whose work comes first?
- Why is dependence central to Jesus' ministry?
- How is joining God different from asking Him to bless a personal plan?
- Where are you tempted to believe God is doing nothing?
- Does God's initiative create relief or uncertainty?
- What relationship may be showing signs of spiritual curiosity?
- Who has God repeatedly placed in your path?
- How could you respond this week?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the Scripture directly shapes their week. Invite a concrete response without pressuring anyone to disclose private circumstances.

- What truth about God do you most need to carry into this week?
- Where do you see God working?
- How can you demonstrate greater dependence on Him this week?

PRAYER

Guided prayer: Father, You are already working. Forgive my self-reliance. Give me eyes to see Your activity and courage to respond.

BETWEEN-WEEK PRACTICE

READ John 5:17–20; Philippians 1:3–6; Philippians 2:12–13; Romans 8:26–30; Ephesians 2:8–10

DO / PRAY Write three places where God may be working; pray, "Father, show me where You are already at work."

MEMORY VERSE John 5:19

COMMENTARY

Leader reference: John 5:17–20

John 5:17–20 unfolds in the context of a Sabbath controversy following Jesus' healing of a disabled man. Jesus' statement about His Father working is not a generic encouragement to stay busy; it is a claim about the Father's ongoing work and the Son's unique relationship to Him.

Jesus' statement that the Son does nothing "of his own accord" expresses perfect unity with the Father, not lack of divine power. The Son sees and does what the Father does. Believers imitate His humble obedience analogically; we do not have His unique divine knowledge.

Philippians 2:13 underscores that God is at work in His people to shape both desire and action. Philippians 1:6 assures believers of God's persevering grace. Romans 8:28 speaks of God's purpose for those who love Him, not a promise that every circumstance will feel good.

Teaching note: Avoid making this passage promise more than it says. Invite honest questions, attend to the context, and return the discussion to Jesus and the authority of Scripture.