



**SMALL GROUP
STUDY**

ENCOUNTERS
WITH
JESUS

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INTRODUCTION



Throughout scripture we find examples of times when Jesus encountered people from a whole host of different backgrounds and social standings. These encounters were not just nice moments but significant events that impacted their lives. Whether it be a conversation, gaining an understanding of their sin, a healing that took place, or a miraculous sign being performed.

These encounters left people either challenged and at times upset by what He said or in awe of what God had done. For those who chose to follow Jesus they embarked on a new journey that would become life long as they learnt to cultivate relationship with Him, obey His voice and become faithful witnesses of the Gospel.

If you are a believer in Jesus today, you too will have experienced your own personal encounter with Him, when you recognised your need for God's forgiveness and grace and you experienced His love envelop you and begin to change you for the better.

But that's not enough, that encounter won't keep you forever. We need to continually interact and encounter God's presence - it's what keeps us moving forward, feeling fulfilled, changing to become more like Jesus, empowered as we go through the ups and downs of life, helping us to understand who we really are in Christ and to be effective witnesses for His kingdom.

As we dig deeper over the next four weeks into encounters that Jesus had in the Gospels, my prayer is that we will be challenged and motivated to grow deeper in the things of God, live Godly lives and most importantly, we would be hungry for fresh encounters.

Best Wishes
Pastor Steve

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

SESSION 1 - Follow Me



Today, in Session 1 of our Encounters with Jesus studies, we are going to look at Jesus' initial encounters with His disciples and the call He gave for them to follow Him.

Opening Questions

- What does it mean to follow someone?
- What kind of people may you choose to follow?
- Why do we choose to follow?

READ : MARK 1 verses 16 - 20 & MATTHEW 9 verses 9 - 13

Jesus first encounters with His disciples and His call to follow Him is dramatically different to the way that modern society may choose to follow someone. Today, in 2025, a person is likely to follow a celebrity, an influencer, a sports star or politician by clicking a button on social media. With that one click they will have access to the latest news, information or tips for better day-to-day living, but they will not know the person personally, even though they might think they do. The reality is it's just words or videos on a screen!

On the other hand, Jesus called His disciples to a different level of commitment - Jesus was a Rabbi (a teacher or master). It wouldn't have been a question of just catching up with your Rabbi next time they were teaching in the temple or receiving a quarterly parchment with their latest 5 steps to success. In Biblical times a Rabbi would gather a group of students to invest their life into, they would be required to leave everything behind (their jobs and their families) to follow the Rabbi, to learn from him, to become like him!

When Jesus called Peter, John, Matthew and the others to 'Follow Me' it would have come out of the blue. One minute they were preparing their nets in readiness for their next fishing trip or collecting taxes - just a normal day, and then the next minute, Jesus appeared and they were leaving everything behind to follow Him.

Discussion Questions

- How do you think the disciples felt, to be called by Jesus?
- What is the difference between the students Jesus called and the students that would usually be chosen by the Rabbis?
- How did you feel when Jesus called you? And why?

Little did the disciples know (and us, for that matter), how much our lives would change when we encountered Jesus for the first time. As exciting as the decision to follow Jesus truly is, the reality is, it's not for the faint hearted - because it asks us to go against the ways and cultures of this world.

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Matthew 7 verses 13 - 14 tells us *“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”*

As the above verse says, following Jesus is not easy. There are certainly easier people to learn from and to follow for sure, or even just to go our own way - more often than not there are huge challenges in learning to follow Jesus, but then Jesus never said that following Him would be easy! Nevertheless, is it possible that the benefits of following Jesus outweigh any of the costs?

READ : MATTHEW 16 verses 24 - 28

Discussion

- What does it mean to deny ourselves and pick up our cross?
- What do you find most hard about following Jesus?
- What does Jesus mean in verse 25 when he says *“Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for my sake will find it”*?
- Do the benefits of following Jesus outweigh the costs you face? Why do you feel this way?

Reflect: Take some time to think about your Christian journey, is there anything you need to change in order to make sure you are truly following Jesus?

To follow Jesus is an open invitation to have a two way, interactive relationship with Him. Each day is a new opportunity to have a fresh encounter with the living God. We can experience this because God has lovingly and willingly welcomed you into His family, He sees us as His sons and daughters and He delights in including you in His plans.

All He asks is that we will faithfully follow Him through the ups and downs that life brings. To truly follow Jesus requires a heart of humility and total submission to Christ, believing that He has our best interests at heart and knowing that He will help to mould and shape us as we give total control of our lives over to Him.

You made the decision to follow Christ when you first encountered Him, the question is: *‘Are you willing to continue to follow Jesus despite the inevitable cost?’*

Additional Reading

Psalm 119 verse 105

John 8 verse 12 and John 10 verse 27

Galatians 5 verses 24 - 26

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