

A close-up photograph of a person with long, wavy brown hair, wearing a white robe, with their right hand held out palm up. The background is a soft, warm, golden light.

**SMALL GROUP
STUDY**

ENCOUNTERS
WITH
JESUS

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

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 4 - The Rich Fool



How many of us would agree that encounters we have with God are not just about enjoying His presence and feeling loved and all warm inside? But at times, encounters with God can be uncomfortable experiences as He brings conviction or a challenge that requires us to give something up or to change in order for us to grow in faith.

In the fourth and final session of Encounters with Jesus, we will be looking at a conversation that Jesus had with a person that the Bible refers to as the 'rich fool', as we will look at the subject of wealth, how God views it and what He wants us to do with it.

Opening Questions

- What is the most expensive thing you have ever bought? Was it worth the purchase and why?
- If God asked you to give up part or all of your worldly wealth, how easy would you find it to give it away? What would potentially stop you?

Jesus was busy teaching a crowd, when an unnamed man from the crowd asked Jesus in Mark 12 verse 13 *"Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me"*.

At first glance, this perhaps seems like a random thing for a person in the crowd to ask a Rabbi, yet this was more common than you might imagine. People often made requests or asked questions of Jesus. Over the course of His ministry the Bible records that Jesus was asked 183 questions but He only ever directly answered three!

In fact more often than not, Jesus answered with questions of His own - like with this encounter, verse 14 goes on to say *"Jesus replied, 'Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?'"*. Jesus then uses the man's request to talk about the dangers of wealth by telling the parable of the rich fool.

READ : LUKE 12 verses 13 - 21

Discussion

- How do you view money? Is it a means to an end or is it something that you pursue? What's the reason for your answer?
- How does God view money - does it differ from your answer? If so, in what ways? Use the key reading from verses 13 - 21
- Do you think it is wrong for a Christian to be rich? Why, or why not?
- What do you think Jesus meant in verse 15 when he says *"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed, life does not consist in an abundance of possessions"*
- Looking at verses 16 - 21, in which ways did the rich fool have it wrong about wealth?

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SESSION 4 - The Rich Fool



Discussion (cont ...)

- What does being rich before God mean to you? How does that practically outwork?
- How can you become a better steward of your money? What practical steps do you need to take, moving forward?

Money and financial stress is one of the most common causes of disagreements and arguments in family life, and it's not exactly hard to see why. It has an impact on so many different areas, including our ability to buy food, pay bills, buy clothes, go on holiday, buy presents on birthdays and at Christmas. It is no coincidence then that the Bible has lots to say about it and how careful we should be when handling money.

The world would like to suggest that money is the key to happiness - the more money you have to buy the things you desire, the happier you will be. But the reality is the complete opposite. Next time you buy a child a present, see how long they enjoy it before wanting something else! Running after money and possessions is a life long, fruitless exercise - it causes more problems than joy.

The reality is, having money is not all it's cracked up to be. If we are not careful, it can take over our lives, it's why Jesus says in Matthew 6 verse 24 that you can't serve both God and money. And then 1 Timothy 6 verse 10 says *"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs"*.

Money plays a big part in all of our lives, the question is not so much; how much we need or want but rather the state of our heart towards it. There are two questions then that we need to ask ourselves:

- Firstly, are we willing to be content with what God have given us? Hebrews 13 verse 5 says *"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'never will I leave you; never will I forsake you'"*.
- Secondly, how will we use what God have given us? Will we use it to honour God in our tithes and offerings and helping others **OR** will we seek to build our own empire. Proverbs 3 verses 9 - 10 encourages us to *"Honour the Lord with your wealth, and with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine"*.

The truth is, we can't take our wealth with us. Many have tried - just look at the Pharaoh's! Everything we have is a result of God blessing us. He has given us the skills to get the jobs that provide the money for us to live. Rather than focus on earthly riches, let's be people who focus our minds on storing up riches that have lasting value.

cont ...

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As Matthew 6 verses 20 - 21 says *“Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”*.

Reflection and Prayer Time

Take some time individually to reflect around your discussions on money.

Is God wanting to highlight any areas in your life that need attention?

After a time of reflection, pray together as a group, sharing any prayer requests as you feel comfortable.

Additional Reading

Ecclesiastes 5 verse 10

Proverbs 23 verses 4 - 5

Luke 6 verse 38

Acts 2 verses 44 - 35

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