

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a sunset or sunrise sky with warm orange and yellow tones. Two hands are visible: one on the left side, reaching upwards, and another on the bottom right, also reaching upwards. In the center of the image, a faint silhouette of a cross is visible against the bright light of the sun.

# ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

**SMALL GROUP  
STUDY**

# 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.

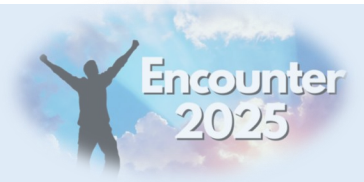
If you are a believer in Jesus today, you too will have experienced your own personal encounter with Him, when you recognised your need for God's forgiveness and grace and you experienced His love envelop you and begin to change you for the better.

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

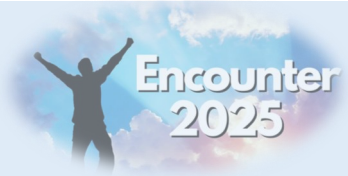


## INDEX

Session 1	Follow Me
Session 2	Mary and Martha
Session 3	The Storm
Session 4	The Rich Fool

# 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.

# ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

## SESSION 1 - Follow Me



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

# ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

## SESSION 2 - Mary & Martha



In our second study from Encounters with Jesus in the Gospel, we are going to be focussing on an encounter that Jesus shared with Mary and Martha.

**READ : LUKE 10 verses 38 - 42**

### Opening Questions

- Are you naturally more of a doer 'always on the go' or are you more likely to 'stop and be present'? Why do you think that is?
- What would your response be if you knew Jesus was coming over to your house today to visit? What do you think would be your priority and why?

Life is busy, there is always something for us to do - whether we are pursuing our career, bringing up a family, seeking new experiences or in our retirement years. The only time we are not busy is when we are asleep! But is being seen to be busy the most important thing?

Mary and Martha were given the same opportunity, they both were aware that Jesus was coming over - but they both decided that different things were important. Mary decided her time would be best spent at Jesus' feet, whilst Martha busied herself making sure that Jesus would have a wonderful experience and be treated with honour (because she had taken the time to make the house tidy, put the best cutlery out and the food was on point!)

Martha's reason behind what she chose wasn't wrong, per se; she wasn't putting herself first, she wasn't doing something evil or being underhand, she was doing all this for Jesus. But in her eagerness to do her best, and to be a blessing, is it possible that she became overwhelmed and missed out on what was most important?

### Discussion

- Who do you see yourself most in - Mary or Martha? Why?
- What do you think it means to sit at Jesus' feet? What might that look like for you?
- Read verse 40 again. What can we learn from Martha's outburst about how she was feeling? Was she justified in her annoyance or do you think there was something deeper going on?
- What does Jesus want to teach us when he says in verse 42 *'Few things are needed - or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.'*
- How can we practically go about cultivating a culture of being in God's presence over being busy?
- What is your biggest challenge to spending time in God's presence? What can you do to overcome it?

# ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

## SESSION 2 - Mary & Martha



There is nothing wrong with us being practical, getting things done, being busy with kingdom work - if we don't, we will never fulfil the commission to make disciples of all nations! BUT, through the encounters that Jesus had with both Mary and Martha we can learn that there is a priority order. We can't expect to be successful in our endeavours for God's kingdom if we don't first learn to sit at Jesus' feet.

It's at the feet of Jesus that we find rest for our souls, it's at the feet of Jesus that we find our purpose and hear His direction, it's at the feet of Jesus that we are inspired and empowered to go and fulfil His kingdom purposes. It's from being in the presence of Jesus that everything else flows.

As Jesus says in Matthew 6 verse 33: *"Seek first the kingdom of heaven and his righteousness, and all of these things will be added unto you"* He will provide for all of our needs both physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

There is no greater purpose for our lives than to spend time at Jesus' feet and equally there is nothing more that Jesus wants than to spend time with you.

\*\*\*\*\*

Why not finish your time together by reflecting on something that has stood out for you in the study and spend some time in prayer.

### Additional Reading

Matthew 6 verse 6

Philippians 4 verse 19

John 15 verses 4 - 8

James 4 verse 8

# ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

## SESSION 3 - The Storm



In Session three of our Encounters with Jesus series, we are going to look at the encounter that Jesus had with His disciples on the Sea of Galilee when He calms the storm.

Jesus and the disciples had just finished a particularly busy period of ministry, in chapter 7 of Matthew we see Jesus teaching at the Sermon on the Mount. Then in chapter 8, after He came down from the mountain, He cleanses a leper and has the encounter with the centurion and the healing of his servant, as well as the healing of Peter's mother-in-law.

It's then, after this, that Jesus decides to take His disciples onto the Sea of Galilee in boats in order to get some rest and solitude from the crowds and busyness of ministry.

**READ : MATTHEW 8 verses 23 - 27**

### Opening Questions

- What are you scared of and why?
- What makes fear such a powerful emotion?

Whilst Jesus and His disciples were sailing, suddenly a storm rose and buffeted the boat. What's important to recognise is this was no ordinary storm. A good portion of these disciples were fishermen, they would be used to storms, they were strong, brave young men who weren't bothered by wind and rain. Yet, in this passage we find the disciples fearful, believing they were going to die. The fear was so real for them that they woke Jesus from his sleep, shouting in verse 25 *"Save us Lord, we are perishing"*.

### Discussion

- Why did the disciples react to Jesus in the way they did in verse 25? Have you ever had a similar response? Why do you think that was?
- Do you think Jesus' response to the disciples in verse 26 is a little harsh, considering the circumstances? Why do you think Jesus responded in this way, what was He trying to teach them and us?
- No one enjoys facing tough times but why is facing up to the storms of life an important part of our Christian experience?
- What does it mean to have faith, even in the most difficult situations of life?
- What does Jesus sleeping in the boat (verse 24) tell us about how He was feeling regarding the storm? And equally, how he feels about the storms we go through? How should that make us feel and respond when tough times come?
- What do you need to do practically in the storms of life in order to face up to them with confidence?
- What have you learnt about God from this passage? What have you learnt about yourself?



# ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

## SESSION 3 - The Storm



Throughout our lives we will face storms. For the disciples it was a physical issue that they felt could potentially end their lives, for us it could come in the form of health issues, breakdown in relationships, loss of jobs, financial issues, death of a loved one, choices made by others or things we perhaps have brought on ourselves by the decisions we have made.

The disciples felt afraid, they felt out of control, they felt on their own whilst Jesus was sound asleep in the boat like he didn't have a care in the world. Have you ever felt like that? I certainly have! Moments when I have been fearful of what might happen and usually I have made it the worse case scenario in my head, I felt totally out of control and wondered where are you God?

Yet, there is something significant about Jesus being asleep whilst the storm raged. Storms don't worry Jesus - there is nothing that surprises or scares Him! What the disciples failed to realise was that Jesus was in total control of what was happening and He was there with them - he knows better than we ever could. Verse 26 tells us *"Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was great calm"*. Just one word, one touch from our King can change everything.

Whether you fully recognise it or not, Jesus will always be with you through your storms and he can be fully trusted. Joshua 1 verse 5 tells us *"No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you"*.

All God requires of us is to have faith to believe that He will lead us through, that we give total control over to Him and we trust even when our circumstances suggest we should be fearful. You see, nothing good comes from fear, but faith on the other hand leads to spiritual growth, a greater sense of purpose and fulfilment, and confidence for a better future both in this life and the one to come.

How does faith grow in us? By being intentional in seeking fresh encounters with Jesus and spending time in His presence, talking to Him about our fears, listening to Him and responding in obedience. As Psalm 34 verse 4 says *"I sought the Lord, and He answered me, He delivered me from all my fears"*.

As we continue on our journey of encounter this year, my prayer is that you will experience a fresh release of faith over your life—whether you are experiencing a storm, a challenge or if things are going well; knowing that God is with you every step of the way!

**Additional Reading**

**Psalm 34**

**Isaiah 41 verse 10**

**Matthew 17 verses 20 - 21**

**2 Timothy 1 verse 7**

# 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?

# ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

## 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 ...

# ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

## SESSION 4 - The Rich Fool



Encounter  
2025

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 - 45

This Small Study Guide has been produced by Elim Ryedale Publishing.

For more information contact:

ELIM RYEDALE CHURCH  
62–64 CASTLEGATE, MALTON, YO17 7DZ  
TELEPHONE: 01653 697796  
EMAIL: [office@elimryedale.net](mailto:office@elimryedale.net)  
WEBSITE: [www.elimryedale.net](http://www.elimryedale.net)

  
**Elim Ryedale Church**  
Reaching Ryedale for Jesus

Elim Ryedale



Publishing