



ENCOUNTER —WITH— GOD

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EXTRA

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HELPING PEOPLE MEET GOD EVERY DAY

A GUIDE FOR MEETING GOD DAILY IN HIS WORD

Welcome to *EXTRAS*

EXTRAS has been created as an additional resource to use with Scripture Union's daily devotional *Encounter with God*. It is an excellent tool for small group Bible study and can also enhance your own individual Bible reading. These questions will encourage you to dig deeper into the meaning of the Scripture passages you have read during the week.

Mark 15: 21-16:8

1. Jesus refused wine mixed with myrrh offered to him as he suffered on the cross. Said to be more valuable than gold, myrrh was used as a sacred oil in the tabernacle and to anoint priests and royalty; it is used even today for its analgesic properties. Why might Jesus have refused the wine mixed with myrrh?
2. As Jesus breathed his last, the centurion confessed Jesus to be the Son of God. When given the opportunity to tell others about Jesus, what do you feel it is important to say? What is your confession?
3. Joseph of Arimathea is mentioned in all four gospels. Luke describes him as a “good and upright man”. Joseph was a wealthy man who was a member of the Sanhedrin, the group of Jewish leaders that called for Jesus’ crucifixion; he took great risk requesting Jesus’ body for burial. Over the centuries, many have been willing to sacrifice and even die so that others might have eternal life. Pray for those who are committed to sharing Christ, whatever the cost - especially in hard places.

Mark 16:9-20; Joshua 1:1-4:9

1. Jesus had risen! He appeared to his disciples and commanded them to “go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.” He had just rebuked them for their unbelief, and now he was telling them about the miraculous signs that would accompany those who would believe. How do you think they might have received what he told them?
2. Just as he had been with Moses, God committed to Joshua that he would be with him; God would not leave him or forsake him. Read the promise of Jesus to the disciples in Matthew 28:19,20. Meditate on Romans 8:38,39. In what ways does Scripture give you courage to serve him?
3. Joshua’s spies swore an oath to Rahab – their lives for hers and those in her household. They could not have anticipated what plans God had for this woman, a foreigner and a prostitute, who would be in the lineage of the Savior of the world. God sometimes uses our decisions or actions for purposes far greater than we could imagine. Have there been times when you have been amazed by God’s “bigger picture”?
4. The Israelites were to cross the Jordan river with its overflowing banks. The feet of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant dipped into the brink of the water and, not only did the river stop flowing, but the entire riverbed was dry! They stood firmly in the middle of the Jordan as the entire nation passed over. Imagine how the priests – and the people – must have felt. Have there been any impossible “River Jordan” experiences in your own life when God provided all that was needed. What was your response?

Psalm 96; Joshua 4:10-24; 5:1-15; 6:1-27

1. Joshua chose men to collect twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan and carry them on their shoulder to the place where they rested. They were to serve as a memorial for their children forever. How would you use the cross to share about God's great power and love?
2. The Israelites born after leaving Egypt had never eaten anything but manna. Imagine what it must have been for them to taste the fruit of the land of Canaan. Recount some of the delights with which God has surprised you since you have come to faith in him.
3. The commander of the army of the Lord appeared to Joshua, his sword in his hand. God would give the Israelites victory over Jericho. Ephesians 6:12 describes our greatest battlefield. Read 2 Corinthians 10:3,4. How would you describe the weapons God has given us for warfare? Look at Ephesians 6:13-17.
4. Joshua commanded that the Israelites were not to let any word go out of their mouths as they marched around Jericho – they were required be silent for seven days. Considering all the grumbling and arguing we read about in Exodus 15:22-17:7, consider what a challenge this might have been. Have there been times when it was a challenge for you to follow God's commands without complaining?

Psalms 97; Joshua 7:1-8:35; 10:1-15

- 1.** Following the Israelite's defeat at Ai, Joshua despaired, questioned God's plan for Israel and fearing for the future of his people. This man had been appointed by God to lead Israel, had heard God's voice and had witnessed many miracles. And yet, with all of that, Joshua was discouraged and afraid. Pray for the leadership in your church – for sustained vision and for courage and perseverance, regardless of what might be difficult and discouraging circumstances.
- 2.** If only Achan had obeyed God's commands and left the spoils of Jericho. Not only would his life been spared, but he would also have reaped far greater reward in Ai. Ask God to give you the faith to never settle for anything but his best.
- 3.** Joshua built an altar on Mount Ebal, offered sacrifices, and afterward read all the words written in the Book of the Law to the Israelites – he read every word. Are there parts of Scripture where it is a challenge to read every word? Why do you think God had those parts included?
- 4.** The Israelites came to the aid of their Gibeonite allies to fight five fellow Amorite kings and their armies. Without Israel's help, the city would have been lost. Where might there be places where you are called to help a friend survive adverse circumstances, especially during these challenging times?

Psalm 98; Joshua 14:6-15; 20; 23:1-16; 24:1-33

1. It appears that God blessed Caleb's faith with health, strength and longevity. That was not the case with other saints. Pray for brothers and sisters who are suffering, that God will enable them to trust him regardless of their physical state. Might there be ways for you to encourage them?
2. Look at Joshua 23:10 & 11. Missionaries serve on a battlefield - many in faraway places; they may be the only Christian among thousands. Pray that they will cling to their first love and have a profound sense of his keeping his promises and his fighting for them.
3. In what he knew were his last days, Joshua reminded the Israelites about God's goodness in fulfilling all his promises. What do you recall about God's goodness and faithfulness in your own life? Think about ways in which you can bless others with your testimony.
4. In chapter 24, 11 verses are devoted to the Lord, the God of Israel speaking through Joshua to tell of Israel's remarkable history - their story of God's interventions and provisions for them. In response, the people committed to turn from foreign gods and serve only him. How does remembering God's faithfulness in Scripture and in our own lives help us turn from the things that distract us from being fully committed to God?

Psalms 99; Ephesians 1:1-3:21

1. The letter Paul wrote to the young churches around Ephesus was meant to show them God's great plan for salvation in his son Jesus. But God spoke through Paul, not only to the saints of the early church and the church throughout history; he speaks you. How has God used his Word and its transforming power in your own life? Thank him for those in your own church who make Paul's words come alive for you.
2. Paul never ceased to pray with thanksgiving for the church members. He prayed that they would grow in their knowledge of their great and powerful God, of the hope to which he had called them and in what were the riches of his glorious inheritance. Let us always be praying for our brothers and sisters – with thanksgiving and for the building of their faith and hope.
3. God used Paul to bring foreigners into the church. He may lead us to different bodies of believers where members do not look like us, where styles of worship or music are not the same, where there are some differences in theology. We are members together in the household of God. In him, we are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. How can you be praying for neighboring churches?
4. Paul, imprisoned for Jesus Christ and anticipating death, prayed for the church. Selfless love was expressed in deep concern that Christ would dwell in their hearts through faith, that they would know the greatness of his love. There are missionaries in prison around the world today. Pray with them the prayers of Paul for those they have touched with the Gospel.

Psalms 100; Ephesians 4:1-5:20

1. Paul spoke of the inheritance that is ours in Christ. What is that inheritance, and how would you describe it?
2. In what ways do the pastors and teachers who serve in your church equip you for ministry and for building up the body of Christ. Take time to thank God for their ministry to you. How can you encourage them and let them know how they have blessed you?
3. God has spoken to us through his Word to make himself known and tell us what he has done to redeem us. He tells us how, in his Son and through the power of his Spirit, he sustains us and builds us up. What are some ways that you can use your words to encourage those around you to know God better, to encourage them in their walk with him?
4. Paul told his readers to walk as children of light. How does walking in the light benefit us? How does it benefit those around us?

Psalm 101; Ephesians 5:21-6:24; Acts 1:1-26

1. We all agree that children should obey (or listen to) their parents. We agree too, that parents are to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. How can parents raise their children so that they want to serve him – with gratitude, love and reverence for Christ?
2. Having the whole armor of God, we are to pray – in the Spirit, on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests, for all the saints. How do you think we are to pray in the Spirit? What kinds of things should we pray?
3. Many of us pray about our putting on the whole armor of God. Paul humbly asked the church to pray that he would boldly proclaim the mystery of the gospel. Remember to pray for your pastor – for the ability to proclaim the gospel clearly and courageously.
4. In Luke's second letter to his friend Theophilus, he began the story of the early missional church. The disciples wanted to know about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. Jesus responded by telling the disciples they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the end of the earth. How did the disciples' question and Jesus' answer fit into God's great plan? Read Revelation 7:9,10.

Acts 2:1-3:26

1. Following Pentecost, people were amazed that the apostles were speaking to them in their own languages. Missionaries spend many years learning languages to share Jesus in places where the gospel has never been heard. Translators labor so that God's Word can be written in hearts' languages throughout the world. Pray with thanksgiving for those who invest their lives so that others will know eternal life. Pray that countless numbers will be saved through hearing the gospel and reading his word in their own language.
2. God made promises to the patriarch David, and In Acts 2:39, Peter tells the repentant Jews in Jerusalem of God's promise to them. What promises has God made to you in his Word? Be sure that your list includes verses like Jeremiah 29:11, Isaiah 41:13, Matthew 11:28,29 and Matthew 28:20b.
3. Koinonia may have proved challenging for you and your church during this past year's pandemic. What kinds of things are you still able to do that encourage fellowship? What are some creative new ways that you can connect meaningfully with your brothers and sisters?
4. People were filled with wonder and amazement as they witnessed the lame beggar walking and leaping and praising God in the temple. Walking and leaping, the healed man gave glory to God – not credit to Peter and John. How, in your own testimony, do you give God glory for the great things he has done?

Psalm 102; Acts 4:1-5:16

1. Following the lame man's healing, about 5000 men who heard the Gospel believed; rulers and elders of the people, challenged with the same message, did not – they even threatened and tried to silence Peter and John. Why do you think there could be two such different responses? Do people always respond in a positive way when you share your faith?
2. Peter and John were perceived as uneducated, common men – yet people were astonished by their testimony. Compare them to the apostle Paul. How do you see diversity within the church used to win souls for Christ?
3. This past year presented challenges to many who may never have faced poverty or want before. Needs are all around us; they may even have your own. How do see your church reaching out to meet needs, both spiritual and physical during these challenging times? How can you be a part of that ministry?
4. The lie of Ananias and Sapphira brought them devastating consequences. The entire church and everyone who heard about their fate was impacted with fear. What do you think motivated them to have such a response?

Psalm 103; Acts 5:17-7:19

1. The angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought the apostles out. There are prisons from which only God can give us freedom. There can be bondage to guilt, to an addiction, a harmful relationship, to countless other things. How can you help others see that nothing too hard for God, that they can be made free to serve him?
2. We read of the apostles and the early church experiencing persecution. As you to pray for the persecuted church, pray, too, thanking him for the freedom that you enjoy in worshiping him and sharing him with others. What needs of the American church can you be bringing before him?
3. There were language and cultural differences leading to discord in the Jerusalem church. When complaints about discrimination were issued by the Hellenists, the apostles chose seven men to serve the people fairly. Why is it significant that the men all had Greek names? How would this have made a difference? What can this teach us for our own multicultural churches?
4. Stephen gave an account of God's provisions for his people throughout history and the world. Take advantages of the many resources available today to learn about his work being accomplished today. Be encouraged and inspired by accounts of missionaries and of reports about the growth of the persecuted church, in spite (or because) if persecution – and share them to encourage others.

Psalm 104; Acts 7:20-8:40

1. In his speech before the high priest, Stephen spoke about Abraham, Joseph and Moses. What important similarities can you find in their stories? What important things does this recounting tell us about God?
2. In the face of his enraged accusers, Stephen looks to heaven and sees Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Why do you think Jesus was standing? What was significant about his standing at God's right hand (as opposed to his left)?
3. As Saul watched the execution of Stephen, one can only imagine what he thought as he heard the dying man cry out for forgiveness for those stoning him. Have you ever wondered why we are told that fellow witnesses laid their garments at Saul's feet? Questions unanswered – but this we know – no part of that horrific event was unused by God. How has he used this account to teach or inspire you?
4. Persecution led to the diaspora. Believers left Jerusalem, returned to their countries of origin and shared the gospel. Pray with thanksgiving for indigenous believers around the world, for their spiritual growth and witness. Pray for indigenous churches, that they will prosper in every way. Pray for God's protection, both spiritual and physical.

Psalm 105; Acts 9-10:10:23

1. Saul had gone out of his way to destroy the church. Yet Jesus met this enemy and made him his brother – he called Saul to be his ambassador, and through this one man, the church flourished and grew exponentially. There are many enemies in the world today who are coming against the church. Pray for them; pray for miraculous transformations.
2. Saul's purpose in going to Damascus was to arrest anyone belonging to the Way. God's purpose for him there was that he would prove to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. Think of times in your own life when your plans were thwarted for God's better plan. In what ways were his plans so much better than yours?
3. The Jerusalem disciples feared Saul, but Barnabas presented him to the apostles, testifying to his conversion and ministry. He was embraced and used to multiply the church. How might you facilitate introductions and integrate a stranger into your fellowship? Pray, asking God to give you his eyesight to see anyone who needs a "Barnabas".
4. Responding to his fellow disciples' call, Peter left his work in Lydda and went to nearby Joppa. Scripture does not tell us what was expected of Peter when he arrived, but God's intention was to see Tabitha raised from the dead. How willing are you to drop what you are doing to answer a call for help? Be open to the possibility that God is more in mind than you think.

Psalm 106; Acts 10:23b- 11:18

1. Peter arrived at the house of Cornelius and was greeted by more than his host. He found a lot of people gathered; Cornelius had called together his family and close friends. When you plan to attend a Christian gathering or to invite another Christian to your home, are there ways that you can include others who need to hear about Christ? Ask God to help you take advantage of every opportunity to introduce family and friends to the gospel.
2. Cornelius sent for Peter to learn about God. If someone were to ask you today, “Why are you a Christian?”, what would you say? If they should ask, “Why should I become a Christian?”, how would you answer? Be prepared to give reason for the hope that is within you. You hold the most important truth in your heart – be ready to share it with others who need to know it!