



PEOPLE
Jesus
MET

Gospel stories of lives forever changed
by meeting the Messiah

AN EIGHT-WEEK STUDY FOR INDIVIDUALS & GROUPS

Prepared by

Joan Campbell

“What do you want me to do for you?”
Jesus asked him. The blind man said,
“Rabbi, I want to see!”

MARK 10:51



A Study on Life Changing Encounters with Jesus

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INTRODUCTION

The Bible tells many stories of ordinary people who Jesus met. Men and women. Jews and Gentiles. Rulers and outcasts. These meetings happened on dusty roads, at outlying wells, in the courts of Jerusalem's temple and in simple homes. They took the form of conversations over meals, healings, teachings and calls to deeper commitment.

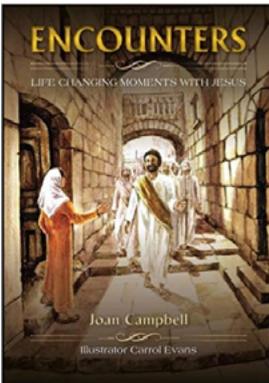
Every meeting shows us how greatly Jesus cares for the individual. Nobody is beyond his love or reach. These encounters give us insight into the lengths Jesus will go to draw individual men and women into a dynamic relationship with him.

This study contains eight such meetings. Most of them will be familiar to you. Yet, let us approach them with fresh eyes and open hearts.

An old form of biblical meditation, associated with Ignatius Loyola, encouraged people to use their imagination and senses to 'step into' a Bible story in order to encounter Christ. After reading the weekly Scripture passage I therefore invite you to also read the fictionalised story from *Encounters: Life Changing Moments with Jesus*. I pray that as you exercise your faculty of imagination and 'step into' the Bible story, you may gain fresh insights and applications from these encounters Jesus had.

The questions that follow are designed not only to enhance your understanding of the Scripture passage, but also to allow Jesus to encounter you in a personal way. His love and desire to draw you into close and committed fellowship is just as strong as it was when he walked in ancient Israel.

RESOURCES



Encounters: Life Changing Moments With Jesus *by Joan Campbell*

- Available on Kindle for ±\$8
- Free if you are a Kindle Unlimited member
- Paperback copies are available at the RUC Bookshop (Christian Book Discounters) or from the author joan@joancampbell.co.za



WEEK 1

Jesus & the Samaritan Woman at the Well

INTRODUCTION

Today we witness Jesus speaking to someone every other rabbi would have avoided. To begin with she was a woman, and the strict rabbinical rules forbade rabbis even greeting a woman in public. She was also a Samaritan, despised and considered 'unclean' by Jews. Finally, she was a social outcast, shunned even in her own community for her life choices. Yet we see Jesus breaking through every one of these barriers to reach out and reveal himself to her.

Their conversation is a surprisingly rich and deep one, and the only occasion before his trial on which Jesus specifically reveals he is the Messiah. Let us immerse ourselves in this remarkable encounter which shows us Jesus' compassion for the lost and broken, and teaches us much about worship, living a Spirit-filled life and witnessing to a world thirsting for him.

Nicky Gumbel said, "Jesus came to quench our thirst for acceptance, relationship and meaning. As we receive this life, we become a source of life for others." Nowhere is this more evident than in the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

To travel from Judea to Galilee required passing through a central territory called Samaria. Most Jews went to great lengths to avoid Samaria. After the Northern Kingdom with its capital Samaria fell to Assyria many Jews were deported and foreigners brought in to settle the land (2 Kings 17:24). The foreigners intermarried with the remaining Jews, resulting in a mixed race. These 'Samaritans' were considered 'impure' by the Jews of the Southern Kingdom, who believed their fellow Jews had betrayed their people, nation and religion.

The Samaritan bible consisted only of the Pentateuch (first five books of the bible). They therefore worshipped the true God but knew little about him.

(From NIV Study Bible and NLT Life Application Bible footnotes)

UNDERSTANDING THE STORY

1. CONSIDER THE SURPRISE OF THOSE INVOLVED

- What initially surprised the Samaritan woman? Why do you think this was the case (v. 9)?
- Find verses that express her growing astonishment as the conversation progresses.
- Why are the disciples surprised to find Jesus speaking to her (v. 27)?
- What actions and words reflect the town-people's surprise?
- Does anything else surprise you in this story?

2. CONSIDER JESUS' WORDS

- Why do you think Jesus starts the conversation with this question (v. 7)? What does it teach you about approaching others in spiritual conversations?
- Jesus speaks of giving her 'living water' (vv. 10 and 13-14). God is called the 'fountain of life' (Psalm 36:9) and the 'fountain of living water' (Jeremiah 17:13). What do these terms mean to you?
- Jesus speaks of worshipping the Father in 'spirit and truth' (vv. 23-24). How do we do this as Christ followers?
- Why do you think Jesus chose to reveal to her that he was the Messiah (v. 26)?

3. CONSIDER THE IMPACT OF THIS MEETING

- What was the impact on the Samaritan woman?
- What was the impact on Jesus' disciples?
- What was the impact on the town?

RESPONDING TO THE STORY

1. CISTERNS THAT CANNOT HOLD WATER

"My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water." (Jeremiah 2:13).

How had the Samaritan woman dug a 'cistern that cannot hold water'? What are some ways that we and those around us dig our own 'broken cisterns'?

2. SPRINGS OF WATER

Jesus speaks to the Samaritan woman of a 'spring of water welling up to eternal life' (v. 14). The term used can be translated as 'leaping up' and gives an image of vigorous, abundant life (see also John 10:10). Does this describe your life and experience? What do you think may need to change in order to experience a spring of water, welling up to eternal life?

3. BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

Jesus breaks down racial, ethnic and religious barriers in engaging with the Samaritan woman. How easy or difficult do you find it to follow Christ's example in doing this in our South African context?

4. COME SEE!

The woman immediately shares her testimony with others and invites them to 'come see' (vv. 28-29). Is there somebody you can share your own story with and invite them to 'come see' at the next church service?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer focusing on what the Holy Spirit has brought to your mind and heart through this study.

Some verses to consider as you pray:

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. (Psalm 42:1)

For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light. (Psalm 36:9)

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10)

The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. (Isaiah 58:11)



Notes



WEEK 2

Jesus & the Calling of Levi

INTRODUCTION

Of all the men Jesus chose to be his disciples, Levi was surely the most unexpected. Recognising Levi's spiritual hunger, Jesus once more broke through social barriers to draw a despised tax collector into his circle of followers and friends. Levi, whose life choices until then had been driven by material gain, instantly responds to Jesus' call. He leaves a life of wealth and comfort to follow Christ.

The meeting between Jesus and Levi, and the subsequent banquet at Levi's house, highlights that God's grace and love is for all who are spiritually hungry and acknowledge their need for a Saviour. Levi's immediate obedience should be an inspiration for us to follow the Lord with similar whole-hearted commitment.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Tax collectors were reviled in Israel. These men bought tax franchises from the Roman emperor and then extorted money from their countrymen for the Roman coffers, taking a portion of the proceeds for themselves. They were known to use thugs to strong-arm people into paying their dues. Seen as traitors to their nation, they were treated as social outcasts. The Jewish Talmud even taught that it was righteous to lie to and deceive a tax collector because that was what a professional extortioner deserved. Tax collectors were also religious outcasts, forbidden entry into synagogues and allowed only into the court of the Gentiles in the temple, therefore unable to worship or offer sacrifices. They effectively cut themselves off not only from their people, but also from their God.

Levi's tax booth was probably a lucrative one on the major international road that ran from Damascus through Capernaum to the Mediterranean coast and on to Egypt.

Levi would come to be known as Matthew and write the Gospel bearing his new name. Matthew's Gospel quotes the Old Testament ninety-nine times in proving Jesus to be the prophesied Messiah. This shows us that Levi was a keen scholar of scripture.

READ:

Luke 5: 27-32

Encounters - Chapter 6 (*Read the story only*)

UNDERSTANDING THE STORY

1. CONSIDER JESUS' WORDS 'FOLLOW ME' (V. 27)

These were the same words with which Jesus called his other disciples (see Matthew 4:19)

- What would it look like to follow a rabbi in the 1st century?
- What did it cost Levi to obey this call?
- What did Levi gain from obeying?
- Jesus still calls us to follow him. How is this call different or similar to that of the disciples?

2. CONSIDER JESUS' RESPONSE TO THE CRITICISM OF THE PHARISEES (V. 31 – 32)

Do you think Jesus was saying the Pharisees and teachers of the law were healthy and righteous and therefore did not need him? What do you think his words mean?

RESPONDING TO THE STORY

1. IMMEDIATE AND WHOLE-HEARTED OBEDIENCE

Levi and the other disciples' response when Jesus called them was immediate and whole-hearted. The passage says that he *"got up, left everything, and followed him."*

- Have you displayed these same characteristics in responding to God's call and guidance in your life?
- When have you struggled with a call to follow him more closely or into a specific situation?
- What might Jesus be wanting you to leave in order to follow him whole-heartedly?

2. THE SINNERS BANQUET

Extend your imagination a little further into the story and try to envision how Jesus' other disciples possibly felt about eating with Levi and the so-called 'sinners' and outcasts of Jewish society.

- Where might we find such ostracized people in our society?
- How could we engage with them in a Christ-like way?

3. PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR

Read Luke 18:10-14. In this passage Jesus addresses the pride of the Pharisees head-on, and shows us the humble attitude God rewards.

- On the scale of 'proud Pharisee' or 'humble tax collector', where do you find yourself?

4. FROM TAX-COLLECTOR TO GOD'S SCRIBE

- Which of the skills that Levi (Matthew) acquired as a tax collector did God use in the extension of his kingdom?
- What skills and abilities do you have that God might use for his purposes?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer focusing on what the Holy Spirit has brought to your mind and heart through this study.

Some verses to consider as you pray:

Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me. (Psalm 119:133)

The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. (Deuteronomy 31:8)

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)



Notes



WEEK 3

Jesus & the Father of the Possessed Boy

INTRODUCTION

From his mountain-top transfiguration experience, Jesus abruptly steps back into the struggles and stresses of real life. Arguments between his disciples and critics. A large crowd wanting his attention. And the heart-breaking case of a demon-possessed boy. The encounter Jesus has with the father of this boy should encourage us, for it shows the authority Christ has over evil and everything that binds us, including our own lack of faith. In addressing the disciples' inability to help the boy, Jesus points to our great and necessary dependence on prayer. *"Prayer is an antidote to unbelief because it shifts our focus from what we can or cannot do to the Lord, who can do all things."* (Lawrence O Richards)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although rarely referred to in the Old Testament, demons are frequently mentioned in the Gospels. Demons could cause mental disorders (John 10:20), violent actions (Luke 8:26-29), bodily diseases (Luke 13:11, 16) and rebellion against God (Revelation 16:16). The Bible clearly distinguishes between demon-possession and ordinary physical or mental sickness, and does not always attribute seizures to demonic possession. In Matthew 4:24 epilepsy and demon possession are listed separately as conditions Jesus healed.

READ:

Mark 9:14-29 and Luke 9:37-43

Encounters - Chapter 10 (*Read the story only*)

UNDERSTANDING THE STORY

1. CONSIDER THE BOY

- What physical symptoms did the boy manifest as a result of the demon possession?
- What verses indicate that this had been a long, on-going struggle?

2. CONSIDER THE LACK OF FAITH

- Where do you see evidence of unbelief in the story? What was the result of this unbelief?

RESPONDING TO THE STORY

1. HELP ME OVERCOME MY UNBELIEF

"I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief" (Mark 9:24)

- Do these words seem contradictory to you or have you, at times, felt the way this father did?
- How do you respond to unbelief in yourself or others? How might God be showing you a different way to react?

2. MOVING FROM UNBELIEF TO FAITH

In Mark 9:23 Jesus tells the father that *'everything is possible for him who believes'*. The NIV Study Bible footnote for this verse explains, *"A person who truly believes will set no limit on what God can do."*

- Where have you witnessed or experienced genuine faith and God's limitless power?
- Take a moment to think about your own faith as you read the definitions below (adapted from the Amplified Bible):

Faith - *An inherent trust and enduring confidence in the power, wisdom and goodness of God.*

Trust - *to lean on, rely on and be confident (in his holy name) – see Psalm 33:21*

- What are some ways we could begin to exercise and grow our faith? How can we help nurture the faith of those around us?

3. OUR NEED FOR PRAYER

In their efforts to help the boy, the one thing the disciples hadn't tried was prayer (Mark 9:29). The disciples had the authority to cast out demons (see Mark 6:7) but seemed to have forgotten that their power to defeat evil was from Jesus and that they could not rely on their own strength to do so. Where have you been relying on your own strength rather than 'leaning on' and relying on God?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer focusing on what the Holy Spirit has brought to your mind and heart through this study.

Some verses to consider as you pray:

"I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." (Matthew 17:20-21)

In addition to all of this, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (Ephesians 6:16)

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. (Mark 11:24)

For we live by faith, not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5:7)



Notes



WEEK 4

Jesus & the Unclean Woman

INTRODUCTION

In our last study (Jesus and the father of the demon possessed boy) we saw the effects of unbelief and heard Jesus' call to deeper faith. In this encounter we witness such faith in action, as one desperate woman presses through the crowd to touch the hem of Jesus' robe. In that moment she receives her longed-for healing and her life is forever transformed.

There are many people today who, like the crowd of curious bystanders, are unchanged by their passing acquaintance with Jesus. Let us not be like that impassive crowd but let us rather, like the unclean woman, press in to Jesus with determination and faith. Only then can our lives be truly transformed.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Mark tells us that this woman had 'suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors' but nobody had been able to treat her condition. We may think that the medical profession had little to offer at the time, but there is evidence that doctors were quite effective in treating conditions such as fractures, abdominal wounds, tooth extractions, haemorrhoid removals, urinary disorders and even cataract removals. Instruments found from that era include scalpels, forceps, hooks, probes and catheters (that differ little from modern catheters).

However, imperfect knowledge of anatomy and a lack of anaesthetics and good antiseptics hindered doctors' effectiveness. The masses also had little opportunity to benefit from the expertise of doctors. Only the affluent would have been able to afford their services

Luke—himself a doctor—is more restrained than Mark in pointing out the failure of the doctors to help this woman (Luke 8:43).

READ:

Mark 5:21-34

Encounters - Chapter 11 (*Read the story only*)

UNDERSTANDING THE STORY

1. CONSIDER THE WOMAN'S ACTIONS

- Why do you think she reached out for Jesus in this way, rather than approaching him directly? (see Leviticus 15:25-33)

- Based on her reaction when she was 'caught out' (v. 33) how was the woman expecting Jesus to react?

2. CONSIDER JESUS' RESPONSE

Jesus was on an important life-and-death mission when this happened. Why do you think he took time to search for the woman?

RESPONDING TO THE STORY

1. BARRIERS TO APPROACHING JESUS

The woman feared approaching Jesus directly, believing that her 'unclean' state was a barrier between them.

- Is there anything in your life that has kept (or keeps you) from approaching Jesus?
- What assurance do you find in the story to allay these fears?

2. PRESSING IN TO JESUS

- In what area of your life do you need to follow this woman's example and press in to Jesus with determination and faith?
- What steps will you take this week to 'touch the hem' of Jesus?

3. MINISTERING 'ON THE WAY'

As with this encounter, much of Jesus' ministry to people happened 'on the way' to doing something else.

- What hinders you from being used by God in day-to-day life?
- How can you become more aware of the needs of those around you and more sensitive to God's Spirit in ministering 'on the way'?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer focusing on what the Holy Spirit has brought to your mind and heart through this study.

Some verses to consider as you pray:

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him (Hebrews 11:6).

Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always (1 Chronicles 16:11).

But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Saviour; my God will hear me (Micah 7:7).

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:13).



Notes



WEEK 5

Jesus at the Home of Mary and Martha

INTRODUCTION

Seen through the lens of our own busy, driven, results-oriented society, the interaction Jesus had with Mary and Martha may leave us feeling a little baffled. Didn't somebody have to make the meal for all those visitors? Wasn't Martha entitled to feel a little frustrated that it all fell on her shoulders?

Yet, like Jesus, we need to look a little deeper—not only at Martha and Mary's hearts and motivations, but also at our own. Let us reflect deeply on the words Jesus spoke to Martha as we consider whether we choose 'the one thing needed' or whether we too allow the worries and frustrations of life to get between us and Jesus. Finally, let us ensure that our service to him doesn't become mere 'busy-ness', lacking in true devotion.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This encounter happened in the town of Bethany, which lay about 3 kilometres east of Jerusalem. Bethany is also the place where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and where Mary anointed his feet with perfume. John 11:5 mentions what a special relationship Jesus had with this family.

READ:

Luke 10:38-41

Encounters - Chapter 13 (*Read the story only*)

UNDERSTANDING THE STORY

1. CONSIDER MARY'S ACTIONS

Luke 10: 39 tells us that Mary sat at Jesus' feet, listening to what he said.

- What does her posture suggest to you?
- The Message paraphrases this verse as, "*Mary sat before the Master hanging on every word he said.*" How do we follow Mary's example of listening well to Christ?

2. CONSIDER MARTHA'S ACTIONS

What words in verses 40-41 describe Martha's state of mind? What else can we ascertain about her feelings based on her words to Jesus?

3. CONSIDER JESUS' RESPONSE

- What is the 'one thing needed' according to Jesus?
- Why was Mary's choice better than Martha's? (v. 42)

RESPONDING TO THE STORY

1. RELATING TO MARTHA

- Do the words describing Martha (Question 2 above) sometimes apply to you?
- When you feel this way, what is the impact on your relationship with God and others?

2. SERVING GOD

"I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer." (Martin Luther)

- Are you sometimes so busy serving Jesus that you're neglecting spending time with him?
- In your service to God, are you relying on your own strength or—like Martin Luther—on God's power?

3. CHOOSING WHAT IS BETTER

- How might God be leading you to change your priorities and 'choose what is better'?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer focusing on what the Holy Spirit has brought to your mind and heart through this study.

Some verses to consider as you pray:

One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple (Psalm 27:4).

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'" (Matthew 4:4).

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you (1 Peter 5:7).

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? (Matthew 6:26-27)

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says (James 1:22).



Notes



WEEK 6

Jesus & the woman caught in adultery

INTRODUCTION

The Pharisees and teachers of the law have devised the perfect trap. It looks like they have Jesus between a rock and a hard place. Say one thing and he's in trouble with the Romans, who forbid the Jews from carrying out their own death sentences; say another and he's denying the Law of Moses. Yet, by his wisdom Jesus not only escapes their trap but turns it back on them, exposing their own disrespect and neglect of the Law, as well as their self-righteous hypocrisy. Then Jesus encounters their 'bait'—the woman whose sin has separated her from God. Compassionately, he calls her to a different way of life—one of holiness based on his forgiveness and grace.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Most New Testament scholars agree that this section of Scripture was not part of John's original Gospel. It is missing in all Greek manuscripts before the 5th century and when it does start to appear in the manuscripts, it does so in different places (e.g. after Luke 21:38). Yet, that doesn't mean the story isn't true. Carson says, *"There is little reason for doubting that the event here described occurred."* Metzger agrees with this assessment in his commentary, saying, *"The account has all the earmarks of historical veracity."* Despite the uncertainty surrounding the text, the story of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery points us to the wise and compassionate Jesus of the New Testament, and to his message that righteousness is to be on the foundation of grace and not law.

READ:

John 8:1-11

Encounters - Chapter 14 (*Read the story only*)

UNDERSTANDING THE STORY

1. SETTING THE TRAP

Read Deuteronomy 22:22 and Leviticus 20:10. Contrast these verses to the words of the Pharisees in John 8:4-5.

How had they twisted the Old Testament law to suit their own purposes?

2. JESUS RESPONDS TO THE ACCUSERS

- How does Jesus' response to the men (John 8: 7) fulfil the Old Testament law, while at the same time highlighting compassion and forgiveness?
- Why do you think the older men might have left first?

3. JESUS RESPONDS TO THE WOMAN

- Read John 3:17. How do these words echo what Jesus says to the woman?
- What words of Jesus show that he is not condoning the woman's actions?

RESPONDING TO THE STORY

1. NO CONDEMNATION

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." (John 8:11)

- Have you heard Jesus say to you 'neither do I condemn you'? How do these words make you feel?
- The woman had been rescued from death but she had to begin to live by that forgiveness. What sin do you have to leave to live fully into the forgiveness of Christ?

2. JUDGING OTHERS

"When you point the finger at someone else, there are three fingers pointing back at you" (N.T. Wright).

- Read Matthew 7:3. Consider honestly if you have the Pharisees' tendency to look at other people's sins and flaws while ignoring your own. What might God be saying to you through this story?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer focusing on what the Holy Spirit has brought to your mind and heart through this study.

Some verses to consider as you pray:

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Matthew 7:1-2)

When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom. (Proverbs 11:2).

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says (James 1:22).

There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbour? (James 4:12)



Notes



WEEK 7

Jesus & the man born blind

INTRODUCTION

"I am the light of the world." These were the words Jesus spoke just before he brought light to the eyes of a man who had only ever lived in darkness. But Jesus didn't stop there. Amidst the scepticism, division and opposition that swirled around this Sabbath healing, Jesus brought an even deeper and more beautiful light to the man born blind—spiritual light. This man's eyes were opened to the truth of who Jesus was, and he worshipped him as Lord. The meeting between Jesus and the once blind man is a joyful reminder of the spiritual light we too have received from God. More than that, it is a renewed call to let God's light shine in and through us in a dark world where people are groping for true light.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The disciples' question about who sinned that this man was born blind, and the Pharisees' comment that this man was steeped in sin at birth, point to the first century theology that disaster or suffering was a consequence of sin. Most rabbis even held that a child could sin in the womb or that its soul had sinned in a pre-existent state. They also held that terrible punishments were inflicted on certain people because of the sin of their parents.

Being expelled from the synagogue (excommunicated) affected every part of a person's life. Effectively it meant they were cut off from Jewish society. Friends would not speak to such a person, no-one would buy from or sell to them, and they would not be able to participate in worship or ritual.

READ:

John 9:1-41

Encounters - Chapter 15 (*Read the story only*)

UNDERSTANDING THE STORY

1. GROWING FAITH IN JESUS

The healed man starts off by calling Jesus 'a man' (v. 11). Trace the progression of his faith through the chapter, based on how he speaks and thinks about Jesus.

2. DENYING JESUS

In what ways did the neighbours and Pharisees try to explain away the healing?

RESPONDING TO THE STORY

1. WHY, LORD?

Have you ever grappled with the question of suffering, perhaps even asking ‘Why me, Lord?’ How might Jesus’ response to the question of suffering (v. 3) show you a different way to approach your own—and other people’s—pain and struggles?

2. FEARING PEOPLE OR FEARING GOD

“But don’t be afraid of those who threaten you. For the time is coming when everything that is covered will be revealed, and all that is secret will be made known to all. What I tell you now in the darkness, shout abroad when daybreak comes. What I whisper in your ear, shout from the housetops for all to hear! Don’t be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10: 26-28 NLT).

The healed man’s parents were afraid of the Jews (v. 22). Have you sometimes let fear of people affect your witness?

3. SHARE THE LIGHT

Read Matthew 5:14-16.

Not only does Jesus call himself the light of the world, he calls his followers the light of the world too. In what ways could you bring Christ’s light into your home, your work and your friendships this week?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer focusing on what the Holy Spirit has brought to your mind and heart through this study.

Some verses to consider as you pray:

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe (Ephesians 1:18-19).

For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6).



Notes



WEEK 8

Jesus washes the disciples' feet

INTRODUCTION

At the last meal Jesus had with his disciples, he did something that shocked them. The one they knew to be Messiah, and had worshipped as Lord, did the unthinkable - he washed their dusty, smelly feet. Peter in particular did not like it; this was not how things were meant to be! Our modern worldview would agree with this assessment. We strive to 'get to the top' where people will recognise, respect and serve us, not the other way around. But Jesus modelled a completely different way. It's the way of love and service, rooted in deep humility. In taking on the role of a lowly servant Jesus commissioned his disciples—including us—to move into the world lovingly serving God, each other, and all people as we hold out his message of salvation.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The ancient roads of Israel were unsurfaced and un-cleaned. In dry weather they would have been deep in dust; in wet weather they would have been muddy, making foot washing a necessity no matter the season. Washing of feet was also a sign of hospitality. In a wealthy home, the second lowest slave would untie the sandals. The lowest slave would wash the feet.

READ:

John 13:1-17

Encounters - Chapter 18 (*Read the story only*)

UNDERSTANDING THE STORY

1. CLEANSED FROM SIN

Consider Jesus' words in vv. 8 and 10.

- How does Jesus initially 'wash' our whole body to be a part of him?
- Why do we keep needing to have daily cleansing, even though he declares us 'clean'?

2. MODELLING JESUS

Find the words Jesus spoke in vv. 12-17 to indicate that he expects us to follow his example of humility and servant-hood.

RESPONDING TO THE STORY

1. CHRIST'S LOVE COMPARED TO THE WORLD'S LOVE

"Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love" (John 13:1).

How does the world's definition of love differ from the love Jesus showed his disciples?

2. IDENTITY AND SERVICE

Jesus' humility and service flows from his knowledge of who he is (vv. 3-4). Does your identity as a child of God make it easier for you to serve others, or do you still feel 'diminished' in a servant role?

3. SERVING YOUR NEIGHBOUR

Who might God be calling you to serve this week? How could you serve them in a practical way?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer focusing on what the Holy Spirit has brought to your mind and heart through this study.

Some verses to consider as you pray:

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Philippians 2: 5-8)

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love (Galatians 5:13).

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship (Romans 12:1).

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another (John 13:35).



Notes
