



Discussion Guide
Encounters — Part 3
LEADER GUIDE

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In Encounters, we'll look at ordinary people in Scripture whose lives were changed by a direct encounter with the presence of God. As we lean into the vision of Coram Deo—living before the face of God—we'll discover that God's presence is not meant to be an occasional experience, but the defining reality that shapes every part of our lives.

NEED A RESOURCE, HAVE A QUESTION, OR WANT TO HAVE A CONVERSATION?
Let us know how we can help! Contact your groups director or discipleship@rockbridge.cc

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"Settle it on the front end of your quest to know Him and experience Him: He loves you."
[Henry Blackaby]

LEADER RESOURCES || **Leader Note** *We do our best to equip, empower, and encourage you to shepherd your group well.*

- **Passage Summary**
 - We aren't sure when in David's life he penned this psalm. He speaks of trouble and enemies—but when didn't David have enemies? He speaks of hard times, of being delivered and hidden and rescued. God didn't simply save David. God was David's salvation again and again. God was his strong tower, his hiding place, and his home.

ENGAGE & CONNECT || **Leader Note** *The goal for the icebreaker is to prepare your group for the conversation ahead by connecting with one another's hearts and building joy together.*

What makes a house a home?

BEGIN WITH PRAYER || **Leader Note** *Begin your time together thanking God for his presence and praying His word back to Him. Ask a few people to pray, taking a posture of humility and dependence!*

Lord, become our stronghold. Be the place we run in trouble. Be our home where we find rest and peace.

MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE || **Leader Note** *Help your group memorize this verse together by having each person read it aloud. The goal is to enjoy hiding God's word in our hearts together.*

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

[Joshua 1:9]

BIG IDEA || **Leader Note** *Read this aloud so your group knows the theme of today's reading and discussion.*

Encountering God once changes us. Encountering God again and again transforms us.

PASSAGE & DISCUSSION || Leader Note Have people read aloud Psalm 27 in the ESV. Your role is to FACILITATE, so keep your group moving along, encourage people to share, and look for opportunities to point out the grace and glory of God! Here are two reminders: 1) Every question does not have to be answered ... go where the Spirit leads! 2) Answers do not have to be read aloud ... they're for guidance!

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you want to have an encounter with God? *The concept of encountering God is scary, and that's just healthy understanding of who God is. He is a consuming fire. He also is the consuming fire who obliterated the altar Elijah rebuilt, made the burning bush not burn up, and set tongues of fire atop the heads of those praying at Pentecost. He can be gentle with us, too. It's okay to be honest about where you are, if encountering God isn't much of a priority for you. We can ask Him to fan the desire to know Him and encounter Him.*
2. Have you or someone you've known encountered God? What happened? *Encounters with God change us. They change our direction, give us guidance, bring healing, challenge us, and reveal sin. Testimonies are our stories of God's action on our behalf, and we can practice sharing them with each other in preparation for telling them to others He sends our way.*
3. What kind of situations does David mention through the psalm that he is trusting God to handle? *Evildoers assailing, army encamping, war arising, abandonment. These are big deals—certainly things God has done for him in the past. But we know from his faith as a young shepherd that his belief came before these things happened. It came from time spent with God and getting to know Him.*
4. What are you waiting on the Lord for? What offers have you gotten from other sources trying to get you to settle for less than God's provision? *Waiting is the food of faith. It is hard to wait patiently, especially when temptations come in. They often look for us like they did for Jesus: "Use your ability to make it a little easier on yourself. Skip serving and go straight to being in the spotlight. Take a simple shortcut to everything you ever wanted."*
5. What does David ask for? What of this do you need to ask the Lord for? *"You do not have because you do not ask" is something James 4 mentions. Jesus Himself says to "keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking." We can settle for how life is, or we can be audacious like David and ask for the things David is asking for.*
6. A big factor in David's relationship with the Lord is time spent singing, in the quiet, in nature, etc. What are the factors in your relationship with the Lord? *There are many ways to spend time with God. We can learn from each other some fun date ideas for people we want to spend time with—there are also lots of ways to spend time with God. Does anyone in the group practice Christian meditation? Do they have prayers they ask for repeatedly? Ways they study the Bible? Songs that have been meaningful to them?*
7. What are some of the words you'd use to describe how David feels toward God, with this psalm as evidence? Do some of these things seem to contradict each other? *David seems content and expectant, grateful and desperate, and so many other things all at once. Our relationships with the Lord also don't have to be one note. We might have been in homes that emphasized certain emotions as being more acceptable than others, but the Lord seems to welcome and embrace them all at once.*
8. How many places or structures are mentioned in this psalm (ie tent, house, etc.)? How can God be a place you stay? *There are so many—stronghold, house, temple, shelter, tent, rock. The Lord is clearly where David goes as his source when he is in trouble and when he isn't. These places are representative of safety, home, worship, and stability. No matter the circumstance, the Lord can*

be the place we run. When we come home to God and run to Him again and again, those encounters and that time in His presence transforms us and makes us people of steadfast faith.

STEP OF OBEDIENCE || **Leader Note** *This is an opportunity for people to put into practice what the Spirit is inviting them to do and live in obedience to God for the sake of love! You can encourage your group to be accountable to one another and use these to follow up with one another throughout the week.*

The presence of God has to be more to us than a one-time event. *It needs to be our dominant reality.*

As you consider your next step, reflect on: 1) How can you make God your home and abide in Him? 2) How can you seek His face?

Give your group a few moments to reflect on their answers to the questions above. Then have your group answer the question aloud. Feel free to separate into smaller groups of 2 or 3 for this question, so each person has others praying with them for the needs they're taking before the throne. The possible next steps of faith below are not for discussion, but simply a resource for your group members.

PRAYER FOCUS || **Leader Note** *Be intentional about saving at least 5 minutes to pray together. Try the prayer activity below or pray for one another's personal requests!*

"Hear, O LORD, when we cry aloud; be gracious to us and answer us! You have said, 'Seek my face.' Our hearts say to You, 'Your face, LORD, do we seek.' Do not hide Your face from us."