



Discussion Guide
Encounters — Part 5
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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"When you wake up every day with that limp, you're going to remember that you were Jacob, but (God) changed you."
[Katy Kazadi]

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

- **Passage Summary**
 - *Jacob's progressive transformation into Israel continues with a surprising assault by a mysterious man (God). In this story, we see how God mysteriously yet humbly deals with us. The result is that Jacob moves from being a schemer in the flesh to being one who prevails in faith and prayer. He leaves the encounter with God to meet Easau weak physically (limping and sleep deprived) but strong spiritually by his faith in God's faithfulness.*

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.*

If we had to pick one person from this group to represent us all in a wrestling match, who are we picking? How doomed are we?

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, as we look at someone in the Bible willing to cling to You and wrestle with You, we know there are things in our hearts that You need to confront. Please be merciful and gracious with us. Amen.

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.

God's presence often brings victory and deliverance through defeat. God conquers Jacob before He blesses him.

PASSAGE & DISCUSSION || Leader Note Have people read aloud Genesis 32:22-32, preferably 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. If you were to ask God to bless you, what are you imagining that blessing to look like? *Answers will vary, but pay close attention to what we assume to be a blessing. Often, blessing looks very different than what we expect—like Jacob's wrestling match with God and a limp—rather than a good night's sleep and assurance that the fight he's expecting won't happen.*
2. What was God's blessing to Jacob? *God met with Jacob. God stayed with Jacob. God was merciful (gentle) with Jacob. He renamed Jacob. The scripture here doesn't go into details about the blessing the Lord gave—but the whole encounter was a blessing.*
3. How is your faith now compared to five years ago? *Some people's faith will have grown by leaps and bounds, and some will have slipped from where it once was. This will hopefully grow into sharing more about what has strengthened our faith and where we've gone off the path.*
4. What did this encounter with God do for Jacob's faith? *We see the difference in his position toward his brother in the scriptures. We see the change in his name and the blessing. This seems like a test of what the past years of Jacob's life have accomplished. It reveals the growth in his faith as much as it alters it.*
5. What is God working to defeat in you? *Answers will vary. It may help for you to take point on this one and go first, so think through it a bit before your meeting if possible. Pray and ask God to show you what He is working on in your life. It may not be "to defeat" —it might be to heal, to cleanse, to correct, or something else.*
6. When has God picked THE WORST timing (we all know it's actually the best) to deal with you about something? *Poor Jacob was on the eve of certain death—he really wasn't sure he was going to live another day. Of course, this is when God upends his entire existence with His overwhelming presence. This is not the only example of this happening in the Bible, either! Perhaps God has done something similar for someone in your group. Follow up on this—how is God's timing not like ours? What does that say about who He is?*
7. What kind of time are you in—a time of intense work with God, a time of rest where He gives space to process it, or something else? *Give your group time to answer the question, then follow up with, "what is the best use of this time?"*
8. Who do you know who is marked by the time they've spent in God's presence? Are you one of those people? *We need more people who spend enough time in God's presence that it changes them! Like Jacob, we need to stay with Him and not give up, not tap out, not let go—we want more of God until we're different because He has marked and blessed us!*

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.

Jacob becomes a marked man—a different man. **A transformed man.**

As you consider your next step, reflect on: 1) How much of God do you want? 2) What do you need to wrestle with God about?

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.

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!

“Lord, we want to be blessed, too. If that means we need to wrestle with You, to lose something and be changed, so be it. Please be with us. Be our God. Draw close. Amen.”