



Discussion Guide
Encounters – Part 6
LEADER GUIDE

.....

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

.....

"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good..."
[Joseph]

LEADER RESOURCES || **Leader Note** *We do our best to equip, empower, and encourage you to shepherd your group well. Access a resource by clicking on the underlined title and share them with your group!*

- **Passage Summary**
 - Four times in this story, we see that God is with Joseph and that the Lord's presence is the primary factor moving in Joseph's life. God is the explanation—He is decisive, personal, and integral to everything about Joseph. Because of this, Joseph's story shows us a man who allows himself to be affected, guided, protected, and promoted by the Lord's presence.
- **Genesis Part 2**
 - This video from The Bible Project places Joseph's story in context with the rest of the book of Genesis.

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 you knew you had 7 years of plenty then 7 years of famine coming, how would you prepare?

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!*

God, Your everlasting lovingkindness went with Joseph through the good and the bad in his life. Help us to see that it also walks with each of us right here and right now. Amen.

MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE || **Leader Note** *Help your group memorize this verse together by having each person read it aloud or quote it from memory. 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.

Joseph has settled the reality of God's presence, and he lives his life accordingly.

PASSAGE & DISCUSSION || Leader Note Have people read Genesis 39 in the ESV. It's a bit long, so you may want to let 2-3 people take turns reading a portion of it. 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. What has happened to Joseph that led up to these verses? *Get a quick backstory—the coat of many colors, the favoritism, the jealousy, the dreams of his brothers bowing to him.*
2. How is this weird favor—Joseph even being described as handsome in form AND appearance—working to Joseph's benefit AND his misery? *Favor is a weird creature. What draws people to a particular person can have detriments as well as benefits. It is for good, but it can also be used for evil?*
3. How do we see that God is with Joseph, even though things keep getting worse for him? *Through the story, Joseph is faithful, but God is even more faithful. That doesn't keep him from experiencing a load of bad stuff. God's presence doesn't protect Joseph from terrible things, but it doesn't leave him to experience those things alone, either.*
4. What are some bad things God used to bring Joseph into position to affect a lot of good? *Some of these are sin in other people's hearts, like his brothers' actions and Potiphar's wife's lust. Some are at least somewhat Joseph's own fault (it was probably unwise for him to share his dreams in the manner he did). God really is able to work in anything.*
5. Matt mentioned two kinds of love for God in the sermon—born of gratitude (what He's done) and hope (what He might do) and love born from who He is. Which one do you default to? Why? *People's personalities play a role in what their perspectives are—what they see. Do you see the things He's done or that you hope for Him to do and love Him in light of that? Or do you love Him in light of seeing Him for Himself. They are connected—because of who He is, He does what He does.*
6. Matt also listed 3 temptations—appetite, authority, and applause. Which one appeals to you the most? *Appetite is sometimes called "the lust of the flesh." It may be simple, but it's so difficult to resist doing anything to get what we want. Authority plays to a desire for control, which is the flip side of feeling fear because of our powerlessness to protect ourselves or others. Applause is harder to see, because it sometimes can masquerade as authority—we want the platform, not for control over others, but because it's easier for some people to hide in spotlights than in dark places. We feel soothed by others' approval.*
7. We're going to do a prayer exercise, one you can do anywhere or at any time. To get ready, let's pray together and invite God to bring to light things He wants to work on in us. *"Holy Spirit, please search our hearts. We want to know You and apply Your grace to our past so we can see that You have been with us throughout our lives. Please help us. Amen."* **OPTIONAL:** You can get a pen or marker and let people write "although" and "nevertheless" on their palms, if it would be helpful for them.

8. What is something that has happened to you that was difficult or wrong, but God still allowed it, like the things that happened to Joseph? *Have the members of the group hold out their left hand like they're holding that thing. It is the "Although" hand. We do not hold our "although" lightly. You might want to ask them to whisper it to God or write it down, rather than share it aloud one by one.*
9. What is something that you are thankful for that God has brought about in your life, like He did with Joseph? *Have the members of your group hold out their right hand as they did their left. This is the "nevertheless" hand. In it is the redemption thing, the good that has come, or the way God's grace has been with them since the bad thing happened. Like before, have them whisper it to God or write it down.*
10. How do each of these things change when they come together? *Demonstrate clapping both hands together as if you're praying. The difficult things and the good things become mixed. God's faithfulness IN our suffering. Our suffering IN His presence.*

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.

As you consider your next step, reflect on: 1) What is settled in your faith? 2) What is still in question that you need to bring to the Lord to be settled?

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!

"Through the highs and lows of life, through the good and bad, may we see Your hand with us, guiding us, and caring for us with new mercies every morning. Great is Your faithfulness, and we thank You for all of it. Amen."