



Discussion Guide
Encounters – Part 7
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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"Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every other virtue at the testing point."
[C S Lewis]

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

- **Passage Summary**
 - In an encounter with God, Joshua is commissioned to lead Israel to take possession of what God has given them—the promised land. Central to this is God's encouragement to Joshua. In the presence of God, there is encouragement and assurance, hope and strength, perspective and promise.

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 is a piece of encouragement you've received?

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, we all need to be encouraged in some way. Please draw close and stoke the fires of our hearts to acts of courage. Forge us and make us stronger, as we know You are near. Amen.

MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE || **Leader Note** *See if anyone remembers the memory verse with no prompting. Then add the reference, then the first word. 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.*

In the presence of God, there is encouragement for real life and in real time.

PASSAGE & DISCUSSION || Leader Note Have people read aloud Joshua 1:1-9 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. What encouragement did Joshua need in this moment? What are some of the instructions he received? *These verses are entirely filled with clarity for Joshua's next steps, but some of that clarity is instruction (go here, do this) and some is encouragement (Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you). Spend a few minutes separating the two with your group.*
2. What did Joshua need to be strong and courageous for? *We see a lot of little hints that there will be plenty of battles and difficulties and hardships ahead for Joshua. But the text emphasizes that he will need to be strong and courageous to keep God's commands without deviating from it.*
3. Do you prefer to look back or look ahead? What makes people gravitate to one or the other, do you think? *A lot of courage is drawing from a foundation—the past faithfulness of God—to keep building toward a future we will not see. But if we hold too tightly onto the past or look ahead with no mind to what we're building on... both are mistakes.*
4. What are some ways your past shows up in your present? *Matt mentioned emotion, perspective/outlook, and memories. There may be trauma triggers that show up for people in their present—pray for their connection with their past to be healed.*
5. If God's encouragement is less about relief, relaxation, and return to normal, then what lesser encouragements have you been receiving? *This could be everything from a fishing trip or bubble bath to an addiction or vice. Lesser encouragements aren't necessarily good or bad—but God's encouragement is always MORE. He isn't enabling...He is able.*
6. If God had already given Joshua the land, why was it literally years of work for them to take it? *This is directly answered in Exodus—God wanted Israel to slowly grow into the land to fit it, or else wild beasts would occupy the empty space left by all the inhabitants. It was theirs, but they still had to grow into it. This is very much the same for much of our potential in Christ—He has secured it. It is ours. But if we do not grow, we won't grow into the spaces God has for us to fill.*
7. What hard thing could you do if God were with you like He was with Moses? *Little bit of a trick question—God is with us MORE than He was with Moses. We have His Spirit, and Jesus has assured us again and again that no thing is impossible for Him. Nothing. Not any thing. All things are possible.*
8. How is your soul? *Matt listed 4 components of soul health, in case you want to go through them one at a time. One is admiration of God's beauty, one is meditation on God, one is doing or taking courage, and the final is perpetual. Some may be able to tell if something in their soul seems off or not quite where it should be. Pray that God reveals more and that He will bring them back on the right path.*

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.

Possess some **holy stubbornness**.

As you consider your next step, reflect on: 1) Where has fear lessened your God-given courage to go forth and obey? 2) Who is someone you need to seek out for encouragement or to give encouragement to? We could all use a little more of God's encouragement in our lives!

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!*

"Lord, I pray that we have been encouraged today. Send us out with encouraging messages to share with those around us, to lift the spirits of one person and urge them to be strong and courageous, to stand firm in Your word this week. Amen."