



Discussion Guide  
Encounters – Part 8  
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.*

*Next week, we'll begin our series on worship, so begin praying for God to bring pure worship from the hearts of each person in your group this week!*

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](mailto:discipleship@rockbridge.cc)



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

- **Passage Summary**
  - *Jesus describes Himself as the true vine, His Father as the vinedresser, and His followers as the branches. Fruitful branches are pruned so they bear even more fruit, while branches that don't abide in the vine wither and are cut away. The key command running through the passage is to abide – to live in constant connection with Jesus, letting His words shape and cleanse us from the inside out. Abiding isn't passive; it's the source of answered prayer, of proving to be His disciples, and of experiencing His love. Jesus closes by tying all of this to joy: He speaks these words so that His joy would be in us, and our joy would be full.*

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 something you inherited?

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 back on Your promise, show us Your faithfulness to the generations.

MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE || **Leader Note:** Help your group memorize this verse together by having someone 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.*

The message closed with a question worth sitting with as a group: how do we walk away from this series not just believing in God's presence, but actually living differently because of it? How do we surrender to Him and allow the Holy Spirit to close the gap between God's presence and Word and my life?

**PASSAGE & DISCUSSION || Leader Note:** *Have someone read John 15:1-11 aloud 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!*

Jesus' words are described as producing, cleansing, pruning, and transforming. Hebrews 4:12 says the word of God is “living and active,” able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

- Jesus says His disciples are already clean “because of the word” He has spoken to them. What does it look like, in practice, to let a specific word from Jesus — not just information about Him — do that cleansing work in you?
- Honestly reflect: whose words currently carry the most authority over how you see yourself — your identity, your value, your worth? How do those words compare to what Jesus says about you?

To abide means to live in — not a single decision, but a continuous dwelling. Jesus describes a mutual abiding: us in Him, and He in us.

- Abiding is described as mutual — “abide in me, and I in you.” Which side of that feels more natural to you: staying near to Jesus, or believing He is truly near to and at work in you? Why?
- Verse 5 says apart from Jesus, “you can do nothing.” Where in your life have you been quietly trying to bear fruit — produce results, hold things together, grow — apart from actually abiding in Him?
- Verse 6 is a sober warning about branches that don't abide. What keeps a person from abiding — distraction, self-reliance, unbelief, busyness? Which of those is most often true for you?

Jesus connects abiding prayer directly to His words abiding in us: “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” Answered prayer flows out of that abiding relationship – it doesn't replace it.

- Why do you think Jesus places “my words abide in you” directly before the promise about prayer? What does that tell us about what “asking whatever you wish” actually means?

**The message named four tensions that mark abiding prayer:**

- God's word versus my wants
- God's call versus my comfort
- Serious versus casual
- Bold versus timid

Which of those four tensions do you feel most in your own prayer life right now? What would it look like to move toward the first side of that pair this week?

**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:**

- If someone watched your calendar and your habits this past week, would they conclude you actually believe you're a branch that can do nothing apart from Jesus? Why or why not?
- As a group, how can you help each other actually live this out rather than just agree with it? Consider identifying one person to check in with before you meet again.

*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. Pray for one another's personal requests!*

*Lord, teach us to abide in You. Be our source for everything, and do not let us go to lesser sources to meet our needs.*