

ENCOUNTER GOD



Discovering God in the Ordinary



For the next five weeks you will be hearing from pastors and lay members about their experiences with encountering God. This will look different

for everyone sharing their story, as it might differ from the ways you have experienced God. The ways in which people encounter God look unique to each individual person. You may even think you have never encountered God before.

Our goal for the next five weeks is to explore what it looks like for others to encounter God, discover how we have already encountered God and how we might be able to encounter God more by cultivating habits of faith through spiritual disciplines. Our hope is that by the end of this curriculum you, too, might be able to share the ways you have encountered God in your life or throughout this study.

Pastor Rockford

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WEEK 1: Do People Still Encounter God?

WEEK 2: Fellowship

WEEK 3: Life Changing

WEEK 4: Worship

WEEK 5: How Do You Encounter God?

WEEK 1: Do People Still Encounter God?

When you hear of the phrase “encountering God,” what does that mean to you?

When thinking of encountering God, it’s easy to think about stories in the Bible where a person encounters God through a huge gesture, sign or even God speaking directly to them. Although we can certainly still encounter God in these extraordinary ways, it’s usually more subtle through our spiritual practices. Though it can be easy to think of encountering God as a “pastor thing,” everyone can encounter God throughout their life.

READ: Exodus 3:1–15

How does God appear to Moses?

We see many people in the Bible encountering God in elaborate ways. One of the most memorable examples is when God greets Moses in the form of a burning bush in Exodus 3:1–15. In this story, Moses is willing to give up his daily tasks and routines to listen to what God has to say. In doing so, he is given great insight into what plans God has for his life. If we aren't open and willing to encounter God, it is hard to experience it.

Encounters with God are not expected to be found through a burning bush; however, when we open our eyes to experiencing God, you might discover personal opportunities where God is leading you, just as God had plans for Moses.

DISCUSSION: What are some ways you can be more open to encountering God in your daily life?

Prayer and scripture are wonderful ways to open your relationship with God.

CHALLENGE: Find some quiet time this week to dig into scripture. Find a book or passage that you've been wanting to focus on. Spend more quiet time in prayer and meditation. Sometimes God can pop up to us through scripture or prayer. But don't be discouraged if you struggle to hear God!

WEEK 2: Fellowship

CHECK IN: How did you do last week in reading scripture and having more prayer time? Did it allow you to encounter God at all? Did God use scripture to guide you in any way?

OPENING QUESTIONS: Have you ever been with someone and felt the presence of God? Or felt like God specifically places people in your life when you need them?

One of the best ways to encounter God is through fellowship. We were not built for isolation; we have known this from the very beginning when God made Adam and Eve. We must be intentional about being in relationships with others.

READ: Acts 8:26–40

In Acts 8: 26–40 we see an example of how fellowship allows you to encounter God through someone else. In these verses, Philip is given a command from God to take the wilderness road towards the south (v. 26). On his way, he sees an Ethiopian Eunuch. The Lord tells Philip to go over to the Eunuch and they have a conversation, with Philip helping the Eunuch understand scripture in a new and deeper way.

God knew that the Eunuch needed assistance and sent Philip to help. In return, Philip was able to share the story of his own encounter. These two people, who were unlikely to interact with each other, learned from one another. In a brief encounter they encountered God through their fellowship.

Why is fellowship so important?

- We need the encouragement and support
- We need handshakes, hugs and high fives.
- We need accountability.
- We need to suffer and rejoice together. We are not meant to go through life as a solo experience.

How can we get more intentional about fellowship with one another? GET INVOLVED!

- If you are studying this with a group right now, you have made a great first step! Getting involved in a small group, bible study or Sunday school group can make a significant difference in your relationships and experiences.
- Go beyond only showing up for Sunday worship. Get involved with your church in a place of ministry where you feel you can contribute your gifts.

Scan the QR code with your camera to take a spiritual gifts survey and find ways you might be most fulfilled in volunteering at the church.



DISCUSSION: What were your top three spiritual gifts? Can you think of any ministries that might correlate to those gifts?

CHALLENGE: This week, look at your top three spiritual gifts and prayerfully consider joining a ministry, group or service at the church that might help you encounter God through people.

WEEK 3: Life Changing

CHECK IN: What ministry has leapt in your heart to join?

We are happy to connect you, if needed! Please call the church at 405-321-3484, and we'll be glad to help.

OPENING QUESTIONS: Did you always know what career path you wanted to take in your life? If so, what was it? If not, when did it change?

When thinking of encountering God, many people automatically think of a call to pulpit or church ministry, which is why many think only pastors encounter God. But the truth is, everyone has a call to ministry even if you are not making vocational ministry your career path.

READ: Luke 1:26–40

In Jesus' birth narrative an Angel of the Lord encounters Mary and gives her the news that she will give birth to Jesus, God's Son. At first, Mary is startled; however, she is open to talking with God, asking questions to better understand her own calling. Mary knew that trusting in God's plan for her would lead to something wonderful...and it did! It gave us Jesus.

God calls us to do specific tasks for the kingdom. God may have called you into a career path that you were made to do. Even if you think that God hasn't called you to your career path yet, God has given you the gifts to be in ministry wherever you are. When we encounter God, we often receive a call. If not a career, it might be a call to join a service project or organization you are incredibly passionate about. When we allow God to guide our life, we start to realize we encounter God in the field we have been placed in, even in our very own homes and neighborhoods.

Have you felt God calling you to a certain career path?

Have you felt God calling you to a certain mission or service project?

When God encounters you with a call, what does that look like for you?

How do you practice Christian ministry?

CHALLENGE: Your challenge this week is to continue to discern your call from God. If you feel you have already discovered your calling, how did you encounter God in this call?

WEEK 4: Worship

CHECK IN: Where were you able to encounter God and be in ministry this past week?

OPENING QUESTIONS: Have you ever been listening to a pastor's sermon and thought "that's exactly what I needed to hear today"? What about listening to a worship song and the lyrics really resonate with your life and what you're going through?

Many encounters from God happen during worship or sacred services dedicated to God. Those are some of the easiest spaces to focus on what God is saying to you. Through our very busy lives, we don't often take time to solely focus on one thing, making it hard to seek God in times of chaos. When you allocate an hour to worship every week where you solely *seek* God, it becomes easier to *encounter* God. Worship is our response to the overtures of love from the heart of God. Worship allows us to be reminded of who God is and who we are to and through Him.

READ: Psalm 95:3–7

This psalm reminds us why and how we worship and encounter God. God is the creator of our entire existence, and worshiping God allows us to embrace God's presence.

Where in worship do you feel the most connected to God?

Share one worship moment where you especially felt God's presence.

How does falling out of the pattern and rhythm of weekly worship make encountering God difficult?

CHALLENGE: Your challenge you this week is to continue to discern your call from God. If you feel you have already discovered your calling, how did you encounter God in this call?

WEEK 5: How Do You Encounter God?

CHECK IN: Where did you see yourself connecting to God most during worship?

OPENING QUESTION: Over the last four weeks, where have you encountered God? Did you discover that encountering God was something you have already done, but didn't recognize it?

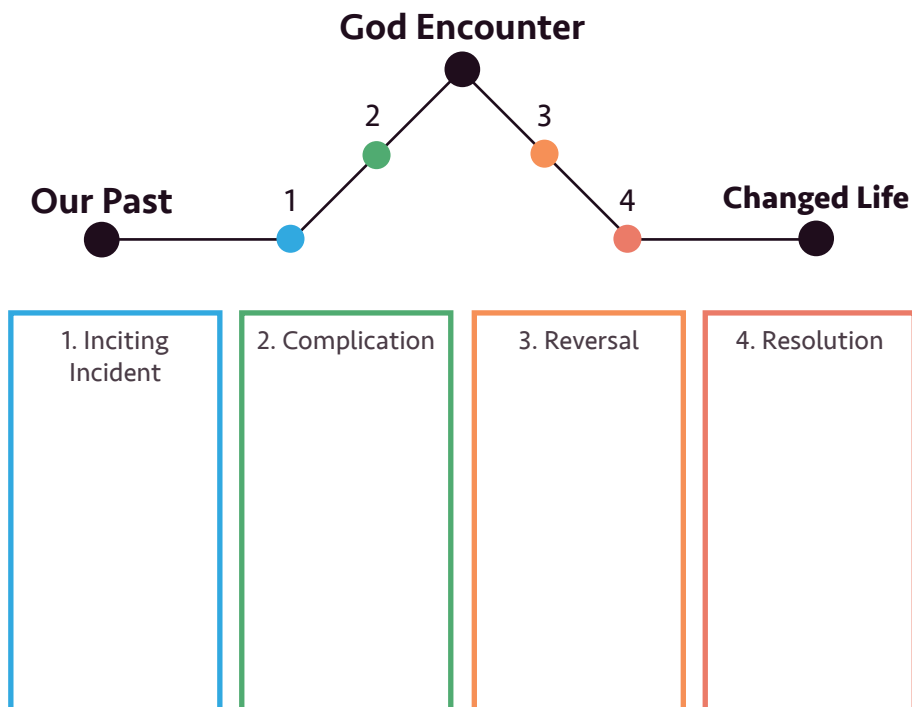
In doing these lessons the hope is for you to realize encountering God doesn't just happen once; it can happen all the time, especially when we are consciously thinking of making these spiritual practices a habit.

SHARE YOUR STORY

Now that we have discovered different ways that we can encounter God, it's time for you to write your story!

In any good story, the scene is set by sharing about the past and/or the present, and then something happens—life happens. In this disruption, our normal patterns are interrupted. Often, we are more open to encountering God in our midst when we are intentional about incorporating fellowship, ministry and worship into our routines—regardless of the interruptions life may throw our way. Once we encounter God, the trajectory of our lives, in either small or large ways, is shifted and transformed.

Using the fill-in-the-blank map below, map out your own encounter with God.





Worship with us every Sunday
Onsite or Online
Childcare & Sunday School offered for all ages

Details at mcfarlinumc.org
or (405) 321-3484