



ENCOUNTER
— WITH —
GOD

Extra

JAN | FEB | MAR 2012

GROUP
DISCUSSION
GUIDE

A GUIDE FOR MEETING GOD DAILY IN HIS WORD

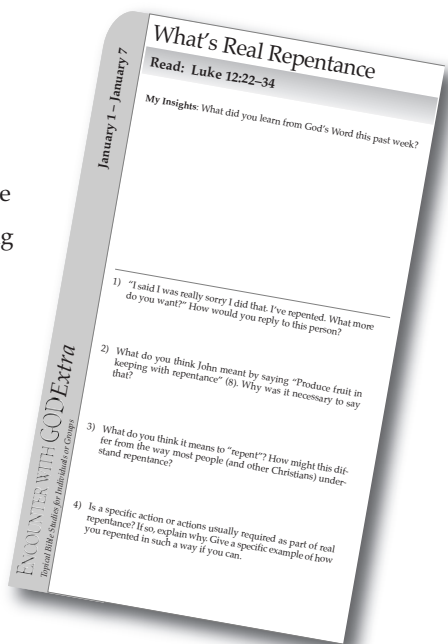
How to Use the ENCOUNTER WITH GOD*Extra* Discussion Guide

The **ENCOUNTER WITH GOD*Extra* Discussion Guide** is a companion to Scripture Union's **ENCOUNTER WITH GOD** daily Bible reading guide, published quarterly. The Discussion Guide features a set of questions based on a topic arising from the previous week's readings. It enables a small group or Sunday School class to share personal insights from their readings in God's Word that week and then discuss the topic, using the suggested questions.

Each week's **ENCOUNTER WITH GOD*Extra*** discussion page will look like this:

To get the most from your discussion time, just follow these 5 simple steps:

- ▶ **Prepare** to read and discuss God's Word. That may include worship and/or prayer.
- ▶ **Share** insights each has gained from the past week's readings.
- ▶ **Read** the passage chosen for your group's discussion this week.
- ▶ **Discuss** the passage, using the discussion questions as a guide.
- ▶ **Pray** about what you've learned from God's Word. You may use the Prayer Journal on the inside back cover of the **ENCOUNTER WITH GOD** daily Bible Reading Guide for personal prayer reminders.



What's Real Repentance

Read: Luke 3:1-20

My Insights: What did you learn from God's Word this past week?

-
- 1) "I said I was really sorry I did that. I've repented. What more do you want?" How would you reply to this person?
 - 2) What do you think John meant by saying "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance" (8). Why was it necessary to say that?
 - 3) What do you think it means to "repent"? How might this differ from the way most people (and other Christians) understand repentance?
 - 4) Is a specific action or actions usually required as part of real repentance? If so, explain why. Give a specific example of how you repented in such a way if you can.

Bring a Friend!

Read: Luke 5:17-26

My Insights: What did you learn from God's Word this past week?

-
- 1) "I have a lot of friends outside the church but I don't think any of them are interested in Jesus. There's really nothing I can do for them." Do you agree? Explain.
 - 2) These men brought their friend to Jesus. What are some effective ways that you've heard of or tried for introducing friends to Jesus?
 - 3) What obstacles do you see to bringing a friend to Jesus? How can they be overcome?
 - 4) The man in this story needed healing and forgiveness. What do your friends need (or think they need) that might draw them to Jesus?

“Help! It’s Hopeless”

Read: Exodus 13:17—14:18

My Insights: What did you learn from God’s Word this past week?

-
- 1) “I really feel helpless right now. There doesn’t seem to be any hope for me. What should I do?” What would you say to a non-believer who asked you this?
 - 2) Why do you think the Lord made this plan for rescuing his people and destroying Pharaoh’s army? Do you have any trouble with it? If so, explain.
 - 3) Have you ever been in a seemingly hopeless situation where you could only cry to God for help? If so, share. Were you able to “stand firm” and not be afraid? If so, how?
 - 4) How has God fought for you in the past? What did you learn? How was God glorified?

It's No Good Grumbling!

Read: Exodus 16:1-36

My Insights: What did you learn from God's Word this past week?

-
- 1) "I wouldn't dare grumble to God. That's not right. He'd be right to punish me—and probably would!" Do you agree? Explain.
 - 2) Were you surprised by God's response to the people's grumbling? Explain why or why not.
 - 3) Have you ever grumbled to or about God? If so, how did God respond? Did the response surprise you? What did you learn?
 - 4) The people's grumbling was really directed at God. Have you seen examples of grumbling against pastors or spiritual leaders that was really directed at God? How common is it? Explain.

“Holy! Holy! Holy!”

Read: Exodus 19:1-25

My Insights: What did you learn from God’s Word this past week?

-
- 1) “Jesus said we can call God ‘daddy’ or ‘father’. We no longer need to fear him.” How would you reply to this person? Do you agree?
 - 2) Why do you think God made such elaborate rules and limitations here for approaching him (10-15)? Why was all the smoke and thunder necessary?
 - 3) Do you think most Christians (especially in worship) maintain a proper balance of familiarity and awe of God? Why or why not? Give examples if you can.
 - 4) How do you keep a sense of God’s awesome power and holiness before you in your daily life? Why is it important to you? What may make it difficult?

There's Work to be Done!

Read: Exodus 23:20-33

My Insights: What did you learn from God's Word this past week?

-
- 1) "Sometimes I get sad thinking of the blessings we Christians are missing—or depriving our nation of—by our unfaithfulness." How would you respond to this person?
 - 2) What do you think it means for believers today to "demolish" the idols of our time? What are the most dangerous and most difficult to demolish? Explain.
 - 3) How would you say God has prepared or is preparing the way for believers to flourish in this country—both as individuals and as the church? What work should we doing in response?
 - 4) What blessings are we missing or would we gain (as individuals and as a nation) if Christians were doing more of the work of God? What work can or are you doing?

Watch Out for Judgment!

Read: Romans 2:1-16 and also Matthew 7:1-6

My Insights: What did you learn from God's Word this past week?

-
- 1) "I don't believe God will judge anyone in the end. That's not like God. He'll 'pass' everyone." How would you respond to this person?
 - 2) What is the danger in judging others? Can you avoid doing it? If so, how?
 - 3) Based on this passage, how would you answer the person who asks how God can judge the "pagan" who never heard the gospel? Are you comfortable with that answer? Explain.
 - 4) If someone asked you how to avoid being judged by God, what would you say? How would your answer differ to a believer or a non-believer?

Works Doesn't Work!

Read: Romans 3:21-31 and Ephesians 2:1-10

My Insights: What did you learn from God's Word this past week?

-
- 1) "Sure, we all make mistakes, but if you do the best you can, God will see that the good out-weighs the bad and accept you. It's only fair." What would you say to this person?
 - 2) How do most non-believers you know expect to be accepted by God?
 - 3) How would you summarize Paul's argument about faith and the law? Do you think that most Christians act as if they really believe it? Explain.
 - 4) What would you say to a person who said it was unfair or unjust of God not to accept someone who did their best to live a good life?

Free At Last!

Read: Romans 6:1-14

My Insights: What did you learn from God’s Word this past week?

-
- 1) “Now that I’m a Christian, I expected to be free from sinning but I know I still sin. I’m so disappointed. Maybe I’m not a Christian after all.” How would you reply?
 - 2) What do you think it means for a Christian to “die to sin” or be “freed from sin”?
 - 3) How does a believer such as you follow Paul’s injunction to not let sin “reign in your mortal body” (12)? How successful are you?
 - 4) What would you say to a person who believed that God’s grace would suffice for them no matter what they did or felt? Is there any caution you’d give that person?

A “Muscular” Hope

Read: Romans 8:18-30

My Insights: What did you learn from God’s Word this past week?

-
- 1) “Christians talk a lot about ‘hope’ but it seems to me to be just wishful thinking. There’s not much real basis for it.” How would you answer this?
 - 2) How would you explain the ‘hope’ that Paul refers to in this passage? What does he mean?
 - 3) Does your hope as a Christian effect the way you live each day? If so, how? Do you think it does that for most Christians? Why or why not?
 - 4) How can a believer wait patiently, perhaps for a lifetime, and still have a sure hope in the promises of Christ? How do you do it?

Enough Foolishness!

Read: Proverbs 26:1-28

My Insights: What did you learn from God's Word this past week?

-
- 1) "I guess he's a Christian but he's also a fool. I don't want to have anything to do with him. It'll only bring me trouble." What would you say to this person?
 - 2) What are some of the characteristics of a 'fool' that you see here? How common are they in people you know today?
 - 3) Have you practiced or been the recipient of any of the kinds of foolish behavior described here? If so, explain the situation and what you learned.
 - 4) How can someone avoid foolishness and cultivate wisdom in life? How do you do it?

Giving that Hurts, Helps!

Read: Luke 19:45—20:8 and Matthew 21:12,13

My Insights: What did you learn from God's Word this past week?

-
- 1) "Our rummage sale in the fellowship hall and our bookstore in the lobby support our missions program. They're an integral and justifiable part of our church." Do you agree? Explain.
 - 2) What do you think was so offensive to Jesus about the "commerce" in the temple area?
 - 3) What do you think are the guidelines to follow when having any "buying and selling" in or around the church property and sanctuary? Explain why you say that.
 - 4) Some churches have bookstores and cafes on site as a means of ministry. If your church has something like that, how do you feel about it? Is there anything you'd change? If so, why?

A “Mitey” Example

Read: Luke 20:41—21:4 and 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

My Insights: What did you learn from God’s Word this past week?

-
- 1) “I don’t understand why the church is always talking about money and giving. There must be many things more important to talk about.” How would you help this person?
 - 2) Why did Jesus commend this woman? What do you think enabled her to give this way?
 - 3) How would you summarize the principles that should guide a Christian in giving to the Lord? Do you think most Christians are guided by them? Why or why not? What guides your giving?
 - 4) What connection do you see between one’s giving and one’s spiritual life and growth? Have you experienced that connection in any way? If so, explain.

Notes

Church-wide Bible Reading Programs That Really Work!



Use **Essential 100** or **Essential Jesus** to ignite a Bible reading revival in your church or group. Then use **Discovery** to keep it going. Call for info: 1-800-621-LAMP

Get Your Copy of **Encounter with God**[®]

Encounter with God is the quarterly Bible Reading Guide that takes you through the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice in five years, reading 10-20 verses per day. It includes in-depth commentary on each passage, prayers, applications and more. To get your copy, contact your church or Scripture Union: 1-800-621-LAMP (5267), www.ScriptureUnion.org. Thanks!

