



ENCOUNTER  
— WITH —  
GOD

*Extra*

OCT | NOV | DEC 2011

GROUP  
DISCUSSION  
GUIDE

A GUIDE FOR MEETING GOD DAILY IN HIS WORD



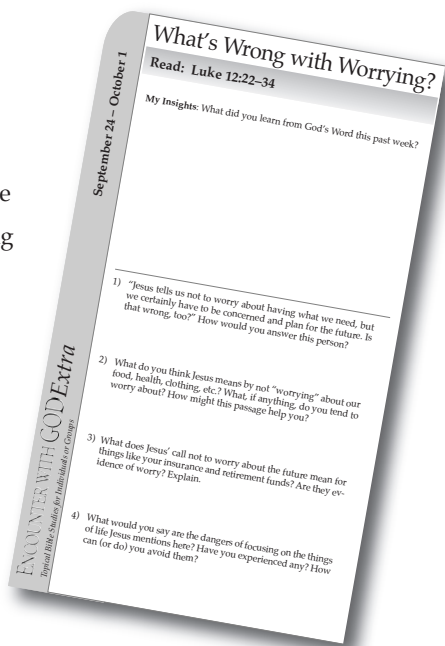
# How to Use the ENCOUNTER WITH GOD*Extra* Discussion Guide

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 Wrong with Worrying?

Read: Luke 12:22–34

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

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- 1) "Jesus tells us not to worry about having what we need, but we certainly have to be concerned and plan for the future. Is that wrong, too?" How would you answer this person?
  - 2) What do you think Jesus means by not "worrying" about our food, health, clothing, etc.? What, if anything, do you tend to worry about? How might this passage help you?
  - 3) What does Jesus' call not to worry about the future mean for things like your insurance and retirement funds? Are there evidence of worry? Explain.
  - 4) What would you say are the dangers of focusing on the things of life Jesus mentions here? Have you experienced any? How can (or do) you avoid them?

# Keeping Your Focus

**Read: 2 Timothy 2:1–26**

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

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- 1) “There’s so much debate and new scholarship about the Bible today that I feel guilty that I can’t keep up with it. Isn’t it important for any believer to do that?” What do you think?
  - 2) What do you think it means to “correctly handle the word of truth” (15)? Do you? How do you prepare yourself to do so? What in your life or experience works against that?
  - 3) What are the most important things a believer should try to keep focused on? What are some of the things that tend to distract you from them? How do you keep focused?
  - 4) Do you know anyone who is an exceptionally well “focused” Christian? If so, tell why you say that and how they are able to be that way.

# What's the Bible "Good For"?

**Read: 2 Timothy 3:10–17**

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

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- 1) "The Bible was written by humans in ancient times so I don't see why people think it's important today. It's just another 'great book' like the Greeks wrote." How would you answer this person?
  - 2) How would you summarize or describe the characteristics of the Bible given here? What is it said to be "good for"? Does it function that way for you? Explain.
  - 3) How is Paul's view of the Bible different from that of most people you know today (including some Christians you know)?
  - 4) What is your personal view of the Bible and its role in the life of a Christian? How did you come to have that view? What effect, if any, has this passage had on it?

# What Is the “Good Life”?

**Read: Titus 3:1-15**

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

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- 1) “My idea of a ‘good life’ is to love my family and friends and do some good for the world before I die. That’s what makes life worthwhile.” How would you reply?
  - 2) What are the elements of “a good life” that Paul mentions here? What would you add, if anything? How do you try to live a “good life”? What most hinders you? What most helps you?
  - 3) In your opinion, do most Christians you know live what Paul considers a “good life”? If not, why not?
  - 4) How do most people you know define a “good life”? How does this compare with Paul’s and other descriptions of a good life you know of in the Bible? Why are they different?

# The Tradition Trap

**Read:** Mark 7:1–13

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

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- 1) “Traditions are reliable guides to worship and living passed on to us from those who went before. As a general rule, we ought to respect and observe them.” Do you agree? Explain.
  - 2) What was the problem with the tradition Jesus referred to here? Have you see similar examples in your church’s traditions? If so, explain.
  - 3) What do you see as the proper role of traditions in your church and personal spiritual life? What pitfalls and what helps do (or have they) presented you?
  - 4) Is there a particular church or personal spiritual tradition that has had a significant impact (for good or harm) on you? If so, why? Is there one you would change or eliminate if you could? Explain your answer.

# Keeping Self In Its Place

**Read: Mark 8:27—9:1**

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

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- 1) "I have to put up with a quarreling, critical family and try to love a whole lot of people who don't love me. I guess that's what Jesus meant by 'my cross'." Do you agree? Explain.
  - 2) What do you think Jesus meant by denying oneself and taking up one's cross? What are ways you do that? What helps or hinders you?
  - 3) Do most Christians you know practice Jesus' words in v. 34? If so, how? If not, why not? What would you expect to see if more did?
  - 4) Have you (or has another believer you know) ever been tempted to be ashamed of Jesus or his words? If so, why? How did you act? What was the result?

# Servants or Slaves?

**Read: Mark 10:32–45 and Philippians 2:1–11**

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

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- 1) “This talk in the Bible about being a servant or slave must just be Jesus’ way making some point. After all, he says he came to set us free.” What would you say to this person?
  - 2) What do you think Jesus means by being a servant or the “slave of all” (44)? Is it practical and possible in today’s highly competitive workplace to “consider others better than” yourself and look after their interests as well as your own (3,4)? Why or why not?
  - 3) How would you expect most people you know (especially non-believers) to react to Jesus’ call to being humble and a servant? What would be the hardest part for them? Why?
  - 4) How do you practice the principles in these two passages? What are the biggest obstacles you face in practicing them? How do you deal with those obstacles?

# Be Smart with Temptation

**Read: Genesis 39:1–23 and James 4:7–10**

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

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- 1) "I've been a Christian for many years and experienced all the temptations there are so I don't worry about temptation much anymore." What would you say to this person?
  - 2) What can a person learn from Joseph's example in resisting temptation?
  - 3) What are the biggest hindrances you see to living an upright, god-honoring life today? How can they be overcome? What role should or does your church fellowship play?
  - 4) What are the most effective ways that you have practiced or seen for resisting temptation? Why are they effective? Share specific examples if you can.

# Dream On!

**Read: Genesis 40:1–23**

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

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- 1) “Dreams are just that and nothing more. You can’t expect them to have any significance for your real life, especially in spiritual terms.” Do you agree?
  - 2) Do you believe that God still guides people or reveals his will through dreams today? If so, for what purposes? Can you cite examples? If not, why not?
  - 3) Have you (or has someone you know) ever been led by God through a dream? If so, share the details. Were you surprised? Why or why not?
  - 4) What are some of the other ways that God speaks to people today? How have they been experienced in your life?

# Can Good Come From...?

**Read: Genesis 45:1–28**

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

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- 1) "God has a purpose in everything that happens, even the bad. So I assume that no matter what happens, he'll bring good from it." Do you agree? Explain.
  - 2) What good purpose did God accomplish through the sins committed against Joseph?
  - 3) Joseph had to suffer quite a lot in order for God to accomplish his purpose of saving many lives (5,7). How do you feel about that? Does it surprise you? Was that fair and right of God? Explain.
  - 4) Have you seen times when God has used sinful actions to accomplish his good purposes? If so, give an example. For what reasons do you think God might choose to accomplish his purposes that particular way?

# “Bless You, My Child”

**Read: Genesis 48:1–22**

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

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- 1) “My children know I love them and want the best for them. They don’t need to hear me gushing all over them.” What would you say to this person?
  - 2) What significance do you see in the words Jacob used to bless his grandchildren? Is there any pattern there for blessings we might make with ours?
  - 3) Are there ways that parents today can and do verbally and intentionally “bless” their children or grandchildren? Have you done so to yours (or to nieces and nephews)? If so, give examples.
  - 4) Did you ever receive an explicit, verbal blessing from a parent? If so, share. What kind of “blessing” do you think means the most to a child—even a grown one? Explain your answer.

# Not A Care in the World?

**Read: Psalm 91**

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

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- 1) "It was a lot easier to believe in God's care back in Bible times. Life was a lot simpler then. Today, you can't help but be worried much of the time." Do you agree? Explain.
  - 2) What do you think it means to "dwell in the shadow of the Most High" (1)? How do you do that? What have you experienced as a result?
  - 3) The promises in this psalm are quite exceptional. Do you (can you) take them literally? If not, how do you understand them?
  - 4) Is a "worry free" life really possible? How do you cope with the inevitable fears, dangers and worries of your life? How successful would you say you are?

# Ready for Judgment Day!

**Read: Revelation 20:7–15 and Matthew 25:31–46**

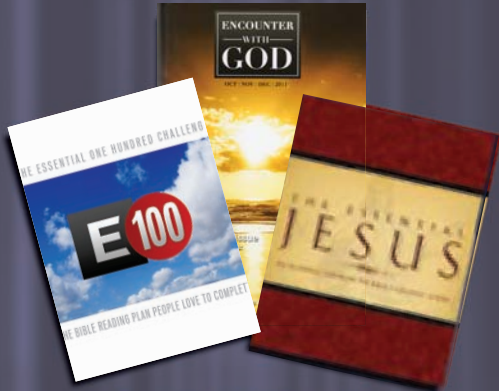
**My Insights:** What did you learn from God's Word this past week?

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- 1) "If there is a 'final judgment,' I believe God will make it possible for everyone to 'pass.' After all, Jesus died for everyone, didn't he?" Do you agree? Explain your answer.
  - 2) Do most people you know believe in the kind of judgment described here? Do you? How does this view of judgment set in your mind alongside that of a loving God? Explain your answer.
  - 3) The dead are judged according to "what they had done" (12,13). Does that mean we are saved by our works? Explain.
  - 4) How do you feel at the prospect of standing before God at the last judgment? Why? What would you tell someone who's confident they would "pass"? What hope can you offer them?

**There's no study for December 25-31.  
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!**

# Notes

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