

## ENCOUNTER - PEOPLE JESUS MET, THEN & NOW SERMON SERIES

### Series Overview:

Encounter is a 10-week video series that looks at 10 interactions Jesus has with people in the Gospels, and also brings some modern stories of people having an encounter with Jesus.

The sermon series is part of our Encounter Church Campaign - designed to run alongside the video series, which might be happening in small groups or as a mid-week event.

### 6-Week Church Campaign Overview:

- Ep 1 – Encounter
- Ep 2 – Outsider
- Ep 3 – Seeker
- Ep 4 – Unexpected
- Ep 9 – Grace
- Ep 10 – Redemption

### Option to complete as a 10-week series:

- Ep 5 – Excluded
- Ep 6 – Treasure
- Ep 7 – Desperate
- Ep 8 – Cost

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## WEEK 01 SERMON OUTLINE- ENCOUNTER

### Episode: 01

### Bible Passage: Luke 1:26-35

### Key idea:

Encounters with God are normative; we should look for them and expect them. Mary's experience is an extreme example, but God speaking with or meeting people is not unusual.

### Sermon Outline:

#### Introduction:

Illustration - Something scary

- A time when you were scared, or somebody you know who scares really easy and it can be funny
- Or you could show or talk about those clips on social media of a workplace/home that seems to continually try to scare one another

This could be considered a 'scary' time for Mary

- An angel appears...scare number one. Do not be afraid – angelic visitors speak this phrase often when they arrive. Same words to the Shepherds- “Do not be afraid” (Lk 2:10)
- We know that Mary is young, a virgin, and 'engaged' to Joseph. The angel delivers a message for her about giving birth...scare number two

Today we have already read about Mary and her encounter with God. Let's consider a little bit of information about Mary from Lyn Cohick from Encounter episode 1

#### Show clip Ep1:01

A bit more about this series we are starting today.

It is entitled, “Encounter – People Jesus Met, Then and Now”

- 10 episodes

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- Filmed in Australia, America, United Kingdom, Ireland, and Africa
- We will be watching the 6 episodes that are contained in the Church Campaign
- Kids church will also be doing this series
- And at the end of the 6 weeks there are still another 4 episodes that small groups can engage with - Plus of course all the other Olive Tree Media material
- We will be speaking to it on the Sunday, and then watching an episode in groups during the week with discussion

The tag line in the Encounter series is, 'People Jesus Met, Then and Now'

- Then... is about people written about in the Scriptures
- Now... you will hear from people and their experiences of meeting Jesus

As I just said, the 'now' testimonies are a big part of this series

- We will hear of testimonies from about 30 people in the series. But we are also going to have local testimonies of OUR encounters with Jesus. Either testimonies of coming to faith or something that Jesus is speaking or doing now.

Why is testimony important...

- They triumphed over him...blood of Lamb and word of their testimony (bearing testimony to Jesus); they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death (Rev 12:11).

Testimonies do at least three things

- Gives God glory. We are testifying to God's work and glory.
- Reminds us of the 'great things' the Lord has done. How often do we pray and then forget to bear testimony to God's work?
- And it also builds our own faith as we share as we 'remember' the good things God has done. Builds faith in others. As you hear another's testimony you think, their breakthrough could be my breakthrough.

**Core:**

- 1. Encounters can get in the way of our plans - Highly favoured doesn't equal an easy road**

Getting bumped off our course

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You had a plan but then you got bumped off it. It may be in sport, work, family, your own life or from history.

Mary is bumped off the course that she thought her life was heading

- Read or mention again Lk 1:26-28

I imagine that Mary had a plan for her life. And in one encounter with God nearly all of those plans are thrown out the window.

Yet we should not think of Mary as a victim

Show clip Ep1:02

There is a danger that we can get frustrated when God's plans seem to get in the way of our plans.

- Can you think of an example of this from your life?

There is an account of a couple that wanted to be missionaries. One thought they wanted to go to one country, and the other person initially felt led to another country. The only thing that they both agreed on is that they didn't want to go to India. And of course, the country that they ended up loving and serving for 15 years was India

They could have been annoyed or said no to God's plan because it wasn't what they wanted, but they didn't do that and went with where God was leading.

Mary is 'highly favoured' (Lk 1:28) but that doesn't equal an easy road.

She will, at the very least, face some difficult conversations ahead. With Joseph, her parents, his parents and potentially religious leaders.

God's plans and ways are very rarely the 'easy road', and we shouldn't be 'surprised' by that (even though often we are).

Think of what is written: "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you". (1 Peter 4:12)

## **2. Encounters open the way to great blessing for us and for others – birthing the son of God.**

Sometimes we use the phrase, 'a sliding door moment'. A moment where a life could have gone one way, but at the last minute one door closed, and another door opened, and life went a different way than we thought it would

- Try to use an example of this from either your life, your people's lives, a movie, or a current situation?

Mary had an idea of where she wanted to go.

And as we've just considered there is a way in which encounters with God can get in the way of 'our plans'. And yet Mary's encounter opened her life up to a bigger life than she could ever have imagined

Read or mention again Lk 1:29-37

Mary's idea of her life was this big but God's idea of her life was so much bigger.

Paul in some ways has this experience (Acts 16:6-10)

- Paul thinks he should go one way, but God stops him
- And then later Paul has a vision, and it is clear now where God wants him to go

Even when God directs us in ways we wouldn't choose, like what country to go on mission to for example, see the above illustration, the result isn't 'loss' it is 'gain'.

Jesus says that as we follow Him, we receive life to the full (Jn 10:10)

- What does that mean? Is it always 'bigger and better'.
- And how does suffering and not being on the 'easy road' fit into that?

Maybe it's about a 'fuller' life rather than 'bigger and better'?

A fuller, or maybe you could use the word richer, life:

- For ourselves
- For those we come into contact with

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Remember what Paul says in Philippians 3:7-9 about his life and his 'sliding doors' moment: Whatever were gains before I now consider loss for the sake of Christ (Phil 3:7-9).

Even in the 'giving up' we 'gain'. God's 'maths' is so different than ours.

Even though Mary gave up something - the blessing she received, and the blessing we received through her, was so much bigger coming out of her encounter with God.

## **Testimony time...one clip from the series...one live from the congregation**

Remind what testimony is and isn't

Is not...

- Saying the person giving it is perfect
- Just about the 'good' times but also the presence of Jesus in difficult times
- That everything in every moment has worked out exactly how we would have liked it

Is...

- Giving God the glory for his work and presence
- Reminding ourselves of the great things Jesus has done
- Building up the faith of others

Testimony from the series

We are going to watch one small part from the coming weeks episode about how one of the guests, **David Bennett**, had an encounter with God

**Show Clip Ep1:03**

But we also want to champion what God is doing in our local congregation.

Get somebody to share a testimony from the local church setting

Try to make it a relatively 'new' testimony i.e. something that has happened recently rather than one from 20 years ago (although an older one of great significance is still very powerful). It may be a 'coming to faith' testimony or a 'God at work in my situation' testimony.

### **3. Encounters don't come cheap - I am the Lord's servant...may your word to me be fulfilled**

Watching anybody who is good at their craft - It may be a sports person, a musician, an artist, a trades person. Because they have paid the cost of study and practice, they are just so much better than most of us will ever be.

Mary's world became so much bigger...but it came at a cost. Mary's encounter came at a cost to her. In that moment she chose to be dedicated to what God was asking of her

Read or mention again Lk 1:38

There is a cost to this encounter, a cost to this 'fuller' call on Mary's life

Mary says the words...I am the Lord's servant

- I encourage you to let those words hang for a moment. Maybe even repeat them a couple of times for emphasis.

I am the Lord's servant is a profound statement  
I'm giving up my own ways, and I'll do whatever the master wants.  
I'll choose not to try and serve myself, but Him.

Jesus says that the way of following him is the way of dying to ourselves.

Consider Jesus' words in Lk 9:23-25

Take up your cross...this implement that you die on...take it up...every day...as you die to yourself. That is the way Jesus says to find life!

Mary chooses to say yes to God's word to her

She chooses to submit to His leading rather than her own...I am the Lord's servant.  
To die to her own wants, thoughts and desires and embrace Gods. This is a great challenge to us today.

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Reminds me of Jesus on the night he was betrayed: “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” (Lk 22:42)

This prayer that is honest about what Jesus wants, but this prayer of submission to God the Father

## **Conclusion:**

We expect encounters although we must emphasise that we don't always get the encounters we expect.

Pete Greig (21:44-22.13)

## **Show clip Ep1:04 or Read Quote:**

*“It's normative for human beings to hear God. The weird thing is when people die, and I've been leading a prayer movement now for almost 25 years, and we continually are hearing stories not just of people talking to God, but of God talking to people. And some of that is supernatural. It's, you know, angelic visitations, audible voices, but some is very natural. It's the still small voice. It's your conscience. It's all of that.”*

We have heard several testimonies today from...

- Mary
- David Bennett
- Local person

Time of reflection/response

It is always good to give people some time to reflect on what we have just been considering. Ask the following questions and give people a few minutes to think it through and write it somewhere

- What is at least one thing that God seemed say to me today?
- What will I do with what I have heard?

Give people time for ministry. We can't talk about encounter and not make space for it!