

# Biblical Perspectives On Encounters With God Series

Contributed by Dr. Madana Kumar, Phd on Jun 3, 2022

**Scripture:** Genesis 28:12-15, Genesis 26:24, Revelation 21:3, Matthew 28:20, Deuteronomy 4:29, Jeremiah 29:13, Psalms 145:18, Acts 17:27, John 4:4-42, Luke 19:1-9, John 15:16, 2 Chronicles 16:9

**Denomination:** Evangelical/Non-Denominational

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**Summary: Whether you are looking for spiritual growth as a Christian or you are looking to lead like Jesus in your leadership journey, one thing is certain. You cannot do that without an encounter with God.**

Encounter With God Part 1

Biblical Perspectives on Encounters

A video version of this message can be seen at [https://youtu.be/\\_BuzSsNHZ\\_I](https://youtu.be/_BuzSsNHZ_I)

Good morning.

Some of you know my conversion story. You can watch my full conversion story in YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvpxU6D-asM> ). I am not going to tell you the whole story right now, but let me make a confession. When I first started to go to church, it was more for the samosa and tea than for anything spiritual. My association with the Church started by me being the chauffer for my wife. To drop her and bring her back from the Church. Now when I say chauffer, don't get any high ideas, it was a 100 cc motor bike (Hero Honda CD 100, for those of you know the older 100 cc bikes) that I used for these regal journeys. I used to drop her at the gate and then go and pick her up from the gate of the church. After sometime, I started feeling comfortable enough to go a little early and start joining their post service fellowship. Admittedly, purely for the samosas and tea that were served during the fellowship. I will stop my testimony here. If any of you are interested in hearing the full story, watch the YouTube video or speak with me later.

You might be wondering why I started with a not-so- spiritual part of my testimony this morning. Well, there is a good reason. Now that I have confessed, that my going to church has always not been for spiritual reasons, I want to ask you a question. What is your reason for coming to Church Sunday after Sunday?

We all have different reasons for coming to Church isn't it? And some of them are really great reasons. To worship God, to pray, to listen to the message, to fellowship with others etc. This morning, God has placed in my heart to explore together with you one great reason for coming to Church. That is to "Have an encounter with God"

I want to thank Pastor Augustine Bhasker for trusting the pulpit with me for the next six weeks. I will be preaching a series on this topic of Encounter with God. Today I have titled my message "Biblical Perspectives of Encounters". God willing, next week we will look at the topic of "Personal encounter with God- A life Changing Experience" and the last week of the series we will dig into "Impact of an Encounter with God in our lives".

This message (and this series) is equally applicable to leaders. One cannot truly be a Servant Leader without having an encounter with God. So whether you are looking at growing spiritually in Christ or you are pursuing a leadership journey of leading like Jesus, this series will help you. Let us jump in.

The first Biblical Perspective of an encounter is this; we might completely miss the point. Let us look at someone who almost missed the whole point. Let us look at Jacob. Genesis Chapter 27 is a story that reads like a Bollywood movie script. Plotting, cheating, Fraud, anger, vow of vengeance, murder plot etc. All that is missing is some songs and running around the trees. Jacob is far from a perfect man. He gets the blessing of his father through a fraudulent action, in connivance with his mother, and as a result, has to run away from the presence of his brother who he cheated. But on the way to his uncle's place a beautiful thing happens to Jacob. He has his first encounter with God. He is weary, he is tired, and he is afraid and unsure of his future. He finds a stone for his pillow and lies down to take rest. And then he dreams of an event that is come to be known as Jacob's ladder, the stairway to heaven and the LORDS promises to him (Genesis 28:12-15). And when he wakes up, Jacob realises a simple truth that many of us might need to be reminded of. Genesis 28:16 (NKJV) Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." Surely, the LORD is in this place and I did not know it. Jacob was obviously not referring to just the night before. The LORD was with him all through his life and he did not know it. He was trying to reach his life goals all by himself through fraudulent means. He was trying to make his life a success through his own efforts. He was trying to get blessings from the LORD through cheating. All this time, while the LORD was with him and the blessings of the LORD was always with him, just that he did not know it.

I don't know the circumstances that brought you here. I don't know how your story compares with Jacob's life story that is depicted in Genesis Chapter 27. Have we been running around trying to achieve things by ourselves, by taking help from a little cheating, a little lying. Have we been on the run because of the sins that we have committed? When we finish all our "church" activities, whatever that might be for each one of us, is it still possible that we might have missed the presence of our God, the awesome God? That is a sobering thought.

The second biblical perspective of an encounter with God is this. It is really up to us. You know that an encounter requires the presence of two people. You may ask, can I really plan to have an encounter? Is it not in God's hands to make the encounter happen? Sure, there are times when God will get hold of you by the scruff of your neck and ask you to meet him as it happened with Paul. But we are in a Church and we are here because we affirmed our faith in the Triune God. So what do we mean by It is up to us. God is omnipresent, He is everywhere, and He is always there. So the first party of the encounter is already present. He has affirmed this several times in the Bible. Starting from Genesis (Gen 26:24 (NKJV), And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham's sake." all the way to the Book of Revelation (Rev 21:3, NIV) And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He has said this several times, the highlight being the great commission, where Jesus says "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen (Matt 28:20, NKJV) . So, God has made his intentions about the encounter very clear. He is there, He is available, He is willing. The first party of the encounter is present. That is why I said that it is really up to us. Are we ready for the encounter? Do we seek the encounter? Do we seek God? The truth is, just as God has declared his omnipresence with us, God has also declared his intent to be sought and found very clearly in many places. Moses advises the Israelites in Deuteronomy 4:29 (NKJV) "But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul". Jeremiah 29:13 (NKJV) says " And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart." Psalm 145:18 (NKJV) says "The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth." Paul tells

the Greeks in Acts 17:27 (NKJV) "so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;" So an encounter with God is really up to us. He has and will continue to do all that is possible to make the encounter happen. For me, it happened through the prayers of Leslie and the first group of Christians I met, and the Bible I was curious to read (apart from the samosa and the tea). What is it for you? Let us take a moment to think about the times when God has invited us for an encounter and we have refused, sometimes knowingly, sometimes unknowingly. Sometimes politely, sometimes very rudely. Are we waiting to be blinded like Paul to recognize an invitation for an encounter with Him? Having an encounter with God is entirely up to us.

The third biblical perspective is that God encounters are for everyone. It is not reserved for a few, it is not reserved for the saints, the godly, the super spiritual persons alone. It does not depend on your qualifications or your position or how long you have been a member of the church. It does not depend on whether your parents and grandparents were Christians or not. Let us look at the story of Zacchaeus given in Luke Ch 19. Zacchaeus was adamant to have an encounter with Jesus and he managed just that. He was a misfit, and a chief of tax collectors. But when he made up his mind to have an encounter with Jesus, Jesus did not refuse him, but rather invited himself to Zacchaeus home for tea. We all know the story. The Samaritan Woman had an encounter with Jesus. (John 4:4-42). She was again an insignificant person of low reputation, from a group considered lesser than the Jews. But when Jesus decided that she needed to know the good news, she had the encounter at the well. Samuel was a little boy when he had an encounter with God. Jesus says in John 15:16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain,. God encounters are for everyone, because He has chosen us, and He has chosen us for a purpose. So let us not even for a moment think that it is not for me, because I am not goof enough, I am not spiritual enough, I am not talented enough etc. Jesus says, come to me as you are. I love you as you are. I gave my life for you as you are. Come and have an encounter with me today.

The last biblical perspective we will look at is that God encounters are meant to be everyday. It is not a one-time experience. God walked with Adam everyday till he fell prey to sin and disobeyed the Lord. The aftereffects of that were so huge and so shattering that the Bible records the first heart break in Genesis 6:6 (NKJV) And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. Ever since He is on the lookout for someone who is fully devoted to Him. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him (2 Chron 16:9 NKJV). But unfortunately the closer He came, the farther we withdrew. So, God searched and put several people through an encounter with Him, so that they might reveal the heart of God to the people. He tried to send the message of salvation to the human kind through encounters with leaders like Moses, Noah, Samuel, etc., prophets like Isaiah, Kings like David, warriors like Gideon, the list goes on. He even opened the motu of a donkey so that the people could have an encounter with Him. But hard-hearted human beings continued to reject Him and move away from Him. That is when He did the ultimate. He sat down and had a conversation with His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and they agreed that the only way this is going to work is when He can come down Himself and live amongst us. That is what Jesus did. He came, lived amongst us, went through all the problems that we go through, experienced all our difficulties, except sin. And bore the weight of all our sins on His body and nailed it to the cross. In doing so, He affirmed what He taught all through His life on earth, especially through the I am statements. He affirmed that He is our daily Bread (John 6:35). He showed that He is the light of the world. (John 8:12). He affirmed that He is the door for us to enter the Kingdom of God. (John 10:9). He demonstrated that He indeed is the good shepherd who gives his life for the sheep (John 10:11,

14). By rising up on the third day He fulfilled His claim that He is the resurrection and life (John 11:25). He showed us the way, He became the truth and He gave us life (John 14:6). He invited us to stay connected with Him because He is the vine, and we can be the branches (John 15:1,5). We need Him everyday, and He is available everyday. You might remember the old Hymn He walks with me and talks with me, He tells me I am his own. This hymn was written by Austin Miles in 1912. His own narrative of how he came upon this hymn reads like this. (Source <https://www.godtube.com/popular-hymns/in-the-garden/>)

#### Quote

"One day in April 1912, I was seated in the dark room where I kept my photographic equipment, and also my organ. I drew my Bible toward me and it opened at my favorite book and chapter, John chapter twenty. I don't know if this was by chance or by the work of the Holy Spirit. I will let you the reader decide. That story of Jesus and Mary in John 20 had lost none of its power and charm.

It was though I was in a trance, as I read it that day, I seemed to be part of the scene. I became a silent witness to that dramatic moment in Mary's life when she knelt before her Lord and cried, "Rabboni". I rested my hands on the open Bible, as I stared at the light blue wall. As the light faded, I seemed to be standing at the entrance of a garden, looking down a gently winding path, shaded by olive branches. A woman in white, with head bowed, hand clasping her throat, as if to choke back her sobs, walked slowly into the shadows. It was Mary. As she came unto the tomb, upon which she placed her hand, she bent over to look in and ran away.

John, in a flowing robe, appeared looking at the tomb. Then came Peter, who entered the tomb, followed slowly by John. As they departed, Mary reappeared leaning her head upon her arm at the tomb, she wept. Turning herself, she saw Jesus standing there, so did I. I knew it was He. She knelt before Him, with arms outstretched, and looking into His face cried, "Rabboni".

I awakened in sunlight, gripping my Bible with my muscles tense, and nerves vibrating, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I wrote as quickly as the words could be formed the lyrics exactly as it is sung today. That same evening, I wrote the tune. It is sung today as it was written in 1912."

Unquote.

Yes! Jesus is waiting to walk with us and talk with us every day. His invitation is to commune with Him every day. Let us respond to that call today. Let us seek an encounter with Him every day.

Let us pray!!