

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

Luke 15:11-24 • Searching [LEADER'S NOTES]

TIME (55 min total)	STEP	INSTRUCTIONS
20 min	THE DAY BEFORE THE MEETING	Make a copy of this Bible Study Googledoc for your group. Make it editable. Post the link to the googledoc in the chat for everyone. Explained: How to make an editable copy of your Bible Study Googledoc. Look over the notes. Come up with a personal story. Ask God to help people encounter Jesus.
2 min	WELCOME	We are gathering to encounter Jesus together. We assume God is always moving in us and around us no matter where we are or what circumstance we are in.
2 min	WARM-UP	Ask an engaging question to get people talking: Has anyone ever made a major sacrifice for you that surprised you? (or have you?)
1 min	PRAY	Invite someone to open in prayer.
2 min	READ THE PASSAGE AND ADD COMMENTS	Invite someone in the group to read the story aloud. After reading, ask everyone to use the comment button to note their observations and questions about the passage.
25 min	DISCUSS	The younger son demands his inheritance while his dad is still alive. How does he view his dad? When he hits rock bottom, he wants to return home, but as a servant. How might a servant get treated? What do you like about how the father responds to his son?

	than 10) use breakout rooms to give space to share in smaller groups.	Jesus tells this story to describe how much God loves us. Where are you in the story? ☐ Far from God. ☐ Hitting rock bottom and pondering returning. ☐ Walking back toward God. ☐ Home in God's arms.
	EXTRA QUESTIONS (if you have time)	Who do you identify with more—the son who runs away, or the son who stays? In what way? Try this—Close your eyes and imagine yourself in this scene. • What do you want to say to the father? • What would he say to you? • Give yourself a minute to play it out in your mind. • (After a minute, ask if anyone would like to share what they imagined).
1 min	PASSAGE SUMMARY	
4 min	MAKE IT PERSONAL Tell a story from your life.	Tell the story of your own spiritual journey back to the Father's house. How did you experience God's love and choose to follow Jesus? How has your life been different since? Better yet, coach someone else in the Encounter Group to share their story!
5 min	APPLICATION 1: SPIRITUAL INVITATION Share the Big Story and make an invitation to follow Jesus! Make sure you practice this in advance. Share the link so everyone can follow along together. When everyone has it pulled up then read it out loud. Plan what you'll say if no one responds or if someone does. If no one responds say something like, "Thanks everyone for listening and responding honestly. I'm glad we can have honest conversations about what it means to follow Jesus." If someone does respond say, "Thanks for taking a risk and sharing honestly that you are ready to put your trust in Jesus! I'd love to pray and thank God for your new faith. Let's get	Coming home to the father means becoming a follower of Jesus. Let's take a look at what it means to follow Jesus. (Share the Big Story)

	some time this week to talk more about what this decision means for you."	
5 min	APPLICATION 2: MISSIONAL OPPORTUNITY Give everyone a chance to write their reflections in the box on the google doc and then ask a few people to share	We hope our friends experience God's love too. Think of 2 friends with whom you can share this story? Can you text them now a photo of it?
8 min	PRAY FOR EACH OTHER (in breakout rooms)	Put people in breakout rooms of 2-3 people to share prayer requests and pray for each other.