

I Have Come to Encounter Prayer Service, Now What?
How to Practice Encounter
A step-by-step guide to praying the Bible

Encounter is a time of worship and contemplative praying of the Scriptures. Time set aside for encounter enables us to discover in our daily life an underlying spiritual rhythm. Within this rhythm, we discover an increasing ability to offer more of ourselves and our relationships to the Father, and to accept the embrace that God is continuously extending to us in the person of his son, Jesus Christ. Encounter tunes the “ear of our heart” to the voice of God as we rest and wait in His presence.

When we meditate on Scripture and pray or sing it back to Him, God often speaks into our situations, concerns, relationships, hopes, and aspirations.

How to Practice Encounter

Choose a text of the Scriptures that you wish to read, meditate on and pray. Sometimes there is scripture that is done corporately; feel free to join in with this. The goal is not to cover a certain amount of scripture, the amount covered we leave in God’s hands, not ours.

Place yourself in a comfortable position and allow yourself to become silent. Often Christians take a few moments to lift a simple prayer to God that focuses their thoughts. Some just sit in silence for a few moments. Whatever works to block out or leave behind the load of the world.

Turn to the text and read it slowly, gently. Savor each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the "still, small voice" of a word or phrase that somehow says, "I am for you today." Do not expect lightning or ecstasies. In Encounter, God is teaching us to listen to him, to seek him in silence. He does not reach out and grab us; rather, he gently invites us ever more deeply into his presence.

Take the word or phrase and begin to meditate. Memorize it and slowly repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with inner being (Holy Spirit in you.) Do not be afraid of distractions as there may be some. Listen as God invites you into a dialogue with Him. In it you will find yourself giving more of yourself over to God and Him revealing more of Himself to you. Don’t be surprised if you are prompted to confess, express gratitude, lift praise to Him, etc... We are just responding to His leading.

Speak to God. Whether you use words, ideas, or images--or all three--is not important. Interact with God as you would with one who you know loves and accepts you. And give to him what you have discovered during your experience of meditation. Experience God by using the word or phrase he has given you as a means of blessing and of transforming the ideas and memories that

your reflection on his word has awakened. Give to God what you have found within your heart.

Rest in God's embrace. And when he invites you to return to your contemplation of his word or to your inner dialogue with him, do so. Learn to use words when words are helpful, and to let go of words when they no longer are necessary. Rejoice in the knowledge that God is with you in both words and silence, in spiritual activity and inner receptivity.

Sometimes in Encounter, you may return several times to the printed text, either to savor the literary context of the word or phrase that God has given or to seek a new word or phrase to ponder. At other times, only a single word or phrase will fill the whole time set aside for Encounter. It is not necessary to assess anxiously the quality of your Encounter, as if you were "performing" or seeking some goal. Encounter has no goal other than that of being in the presence of God by singing and praying the Scriptures.

Scriptures for Meditation

Any scripture can be used, but here are some others have found to be places to start.

Psalm 18, 23, 31, 32, 33, 46, 63, 73, 103, 145

John 15, Romans 8, Ephesians 1, 2, Revelation 4-5,

Blessed are those...who delight in the law of the Lord
and meditate on his law day and night. Psalm 1:1-2