

## I Met Jesus

*Matthew, Mark, Luke and John record many people who met Jesus. Their result of meeting Jesus is recorded as encouragement, healing and wholeness, objection and opposition, friendship, forgiveness and reconciliation- all of this related directly to personal encounter with, and the opportunity for belief in, the Living God. When they met Jesus, they met God in person.*

*Some of the encounters of those -who met Jesus are recorded in detail; others are just cameos. In this series we look at some of the less familiar meetings as well as a few of the more obvious examples.*

*The purpose of this study is for us to meet Jesus too.*

*This series is linked to the Sunday series and each session follows the Sunday when the session is introduced.*

*These notes are for everyone, to use during the series, and to keep for reference afterwards.*

### JESUS ENCOURAGED ME

#### **Session 1: Keep up the Good Work** (John the Baptist) Matthew 3:1-17

Read w 1-12.

John's message was "Repent" - what does this involve? How can a person "prepare the way for the Lord" in their life?

Apart from wanting details of John's organic food supply and his high fibre diet(!) - why would people be going out to find him? What made them confess sins and be baptised in front of crowds of people?

Why was John so angry with the leaders of the people?

What does John mean when he says that some-one else is coming and "He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire"?

What is the significance of the challenge concerning the wheat and chaffs

(If you have time - read the parallel text from Luke 3:1-20 to get a fuller picture of John.)

Now read Matthew 3:13-17.

John knew who Jesus was - God in human form. How do you think he felt when Jesus approached him?

Why did John try to deter Jesus? As Jesus had no sin - what do you think John was thinking when he baptised him?

What is going on when we are baptised? Why do we need to be baptised? In what sense might we meet Jesus?

How do you think John felt when the baptism was over?

How did Jesus encourage him? What would have been the effect on John's faith in Jesus?

**Jesus met John to encourage him in what he was doing for God.**

#### **Session 2: Women and Kids** (a widow and a boy) Mark 12:41-44; John 6:1-14

Read Mark 12:41-44.

Why would Jesus be interested in what people offer to God?

Why does Matthew say that the rich people "threw in" their money?

And what is the significance of the words "put in" when referring to the poor widow?

Why was the widow's offering deemed to be of more value? Of more value to whom?

Look back at vv 38-40. What relevance does Jesus' comment have on society today?

Jesus is God. And though the widow wasn't actually spoken to by Jesus, she was met by him.

How do you think God encouraged her for what she did? (Might she have overheard Jesus' words?)

Read John 6:1-14.

Why is the boy's offering so important to the miracle?

What is the significance of bread?( Read v25 onwards and especially v35)

How do you think the boy felt at the end of the day?

What if he hadn't offered the food?

What happens when we withheld things from God? And what does he do when we offer them to him?

Out of all the miracles only this miracle and that of the resurrection are recorded in all 4 Gospel accounts.

What is really being offered here? By the boy? By Jesus? By us?

**When we meet Jesus, whatever we offer will be blessed by him.**

## JESUS HEALED ME

### **Session 3: Out of Control** (a man possessed) Luke 8:26-39

Read the passage.

Why did the man meet Jesus? Why did he start talking as he did?

What happens when people shout at us like this? What are our options when we are shouted at?

Why can unbalanced people have a violent reaction to meeting Christians?

What should we do when we are confronted with such people? What was Jesus doing even as the man was coming to meet him?

Who else is being met here by Jesus?

Why is asking the demon's name so important?

What is the connection between unclean spirit/pigs^

What was the effect on this man of his meeting with Jesus? What would his life have been like afterwards?

Why did the people of that area not want Jesus to stay? (Matthew records in 8:34 that the whole town went to meet him)

Why is meeting Jesus such a challenge for some people?

How do we introduce people like this to Jesus today? And where ARE such people?

**Some people are so desperate that they are driven to meet Jesus.**

### **Session 4: Sickness and Death** (teenage death and recurring illness) Luke 8:40-56

Read w 40-42.

What do we do when we know somebody is dying? What do we do when it is a relative? What is our expectation? Where does God fit in to the whole scenario of dying and death? What do our culture and the people around us expect?

Why did Jairus meet Jesus at this time of his life?

Read w 43-49.

What do you think was going through Jairus' mind when this incident happened on the way to his house?

How do you think he felt when the news of his daughter's death reached him?

What might he have thought of Jesus? In what way is Jesus' remark in v 50 an indication that he knew how Jairus felt?

Why did the woman meet Jesus in the way that she did, rather than confront him with a verbal request?

Does it matter? Why/ why not?

What encouragement is there for us - who cannot at present see Jesus face to face?

What do you think the woman experienced at first when she came face to face with Jesus? And what was the result of her meeting with him? How would her life go on?

How do we recognise Jesus' touch today?

In what sense did her faith heal her? And what is the peace that she went away with?

Read w 50-56.

What rituals and customs surrounding death and dying do you consider to be helpful - and unhelpful? Why?

How do we expect to meet Jesus when we come to die? Where is he in the moment of our dying?

Why should we go to visit the dying ~ as he did? What is our role?

What do you think happened in Jairus' and his daughter's lives after this miracle?

**When we meet Jesus, he speaks to us and touches our lives.**

## JESUS STOOD UP FOR ME

### **Session 5: The Set-up** (clever talk -Pharisees and Saducees) Matthew 22/75-22, 23-33

Read w 75-22.

Can you think of a meeting you were called to when you realised it was a set-up?

How do we react when we realise we have been trapped or deceived?

Why did the Pharisees set up Jesus with this political question?

What is the purpose of their flattery here? How can flattery disarm us so as not to see the real issue?

How does Jesus deal with it?

How does his answer bring God - and allegiance to him -- into the discussion?

What do we learn from Jesus about meeting people's enquiries?

What might have been the result for the Pharisees of their meeting with Jesus?

Read w23-33.

Can you think of an example when you were asked to answer a question of religion?

What are the big religious questions that people ask?

What answer do they want from us?

What do we do when we get out of our depth with the discussion?

How did Jesus tackle the question here?

How do you think the enquirers felt when they had heard him? What might have been the effect of their meeting Jesus?

**When we meet Jesus with the big questions of life, we receive divine wisdom.**

**Session 6: Evil Personified** (driven to do evil -Satan) Luke 4:1-15

Read w 1-2. When are we most likely to be influenced to do something bad or unwise?

When are we at our most vulnerable? And how was Jesus vulnerable here?

Read w 3-13.

The three temptations to do evil here can be seen as an attempt to make the whole of life purely selfish.

Bread = the PHYSICAL body, selfish, material well-being

High Place = the MIND -thoughts of self, status and power over others

Temple = the SPIRIT/ SOUL - take your life into your own hands, and therefore out of God's care.

Now look at each of these dimensions of life to see how we encounter evil in them - and also meet Jesus.

What can go wrong with our physical, material life? How can we become so self-centred that God is excluded? How does evil get a hold? How can we bring Jesus into this dimension of our life?

How are our thoughts invaded by evil? In what way does Satan battle for our mind? How do we resist him?

What do you understand by the words sin soul salvation?

Jesus' life was "held" or "saved" by his Father in Heaven. He did not need to place it out of this security.

When might we be tempted to place our lives beyond the safety of God's care? And what can we do to ensure continued safety?

When we "come through" an encounter with evil - what is the effect on our lives? Read w 14-15.

(see Zechariah 3:1-5 for an OT example of a meeting with evil- but -with the saving presence of God)

**When we meet evil, we do not do so alone- Jesus stands with us for strength and safety.**

JESUS ACCEPTED ME

**Session 7: The Child in all of us** (children) Matthew 19:13-15; 18:1-6

Read 19:13-15. What attracted the parents to Jesus? How do parents bring their children to Jesus today?

What do they expect from a meeting with Jesus? What was the expectation here? Why is it important that an infant meets Jesus at such a young age? What can they understand? What is the effect of their meeting Jesus?

Who else is affected? What might parents be expressing about their own need to meet Jesus? In what sense might they be expressing their need for a wiser and more loving parent for their children -or themselves?

Who might "hinder" children meeting Jesus today? What about our culture?

Why did Jesus place his hands on children? How can we continue this act today?

Read 18:1-6.

What is Jesus saying here about those who want to meet him? In what sense is there a "child" in each of us?

Why do we need to be humble when we meet Jesus? And what is he saying about our attitude to children?

Why do children need a welcome by us?

Think of your own childhood. Who did you look forward to meeting? Who did you dread meeting? Why?

Think how others may feel about the possibility of meeting Jesus? What reassurance can you give them based on your own experience? How difficult -and easy is it to become like a child?

**We all meet Jesus as one who needs a divine parent.**

**Session 8: A Tale of Two Sisters** (Martha and Mary) Luke 10:38-42; John 11:17-44

Read Luke 10:38-42. What are your immediate reactions on reading this? Be honest! Of the two sisters - who are you most like? In what way do these two represent the two types of people in life?

What is involved for us in opening our home to Jesus? What does home symbolise? What might Martha have kept *closed*? Why is Mary's conduct praised by Jesus? How might Martha have reacted? And what would have been the effect of Jesus' words ?

How do you think they both benefited from meeting Jesus?

Read John 11:17-27. Is there anything noticeable about Martha's going out to meet Jesus and the fact that Mary stayed at home? Look at Martha's conversation with Jesus - how has she grown since the meeting in Luke? How many others in the NT made a declaration of Jesus being the Christ, the Son of God as in v27? Read w 28-44. What is noticeable about the way the two sisters handle their grief, and the fact that Jesus is now here? What can we learn from this?

How do we react in a crisis - even though we know that Jesus is here? Why is it important for us to realise that Jesus wants to come and meet us in the difficult times of life - not just in the good times? (notice how when all was going well Mary kept close to Jesus, but in the crisis she at first stayed on her own)

**Jesus meets us in every situation in life.**

## **JESUS TOOK ME BACK**

### **Session 9: Blinded by Grief** (two followers) Luke 24:13-35

Read w 13-29. All the other resurrection appearances happened to "significant" people among Jesus' group. Why did he invest so much time (7 miles' walk and a meal) and conversation in these two "ordinary" followers? Why did they not at first realise that they were meeting with Jesus? And how do people today not realise that they are meeting with Jesus? When does Jesus meet with people today? What is our role in uncovering and explaining such meetings? How much explanation was necessary here? What is the result of their listening to his explanation? When do we have to speak? And when do we need to listen to those who are coming close to Jesus?

Read w 30-35. What actions took place here? What do they symbolise? When do actions speak louder than words? Jesus IS the WORD of God - when did his actions - as the WORD - speak louder than any of his verbal utterances? Notice what exactly had the impact on the two followers. What assurance did they now have that Jesus had come back to them and that they had been reunited with him? What happens to us when we experience a symbolic moment from Jesus in our lives? Why are we always compelled to share what Jesus has done for us with others?

A significant meeting with Jesus is Good News and can't be kept to ourselves.

### **Session 10: Forgiveness** (Peter) John 21:15-25

Read first Matthew 26: 31-35 and then 69-75. How might Peter have felt after he had made the former promise, and then broke it in such a dramatic and expressive way?

How do we feel when we think that we have let Jesus down by what we might have done? What do we then feel that the future holds for us? Why does it always seem difficult to meet Jesus again?

Why was Peter's remorse not enough for his life to go on as it did when he was with Jesus?

Now read John 21:15-25. Why did Jesus ask three times if Peter loved him? What was the initial effect on Peter?

And how might he have felt at the end of the conversation (when he had been commissioned by Jesus)?

Jesus didn't actually say "I forgive you" to Peter - why? How was it clear that Peter had actually been forgiven? What would now be involved in the words "follow me"?

Why is forgiveness so important?

Why is it sometimes difficult for us to accept that Jesus will have us back? (remember Luke 15:11-32)

Why is it so difficult for us to accept that we have been forgiven and that Jesus has put our sin away for ever?

What is the encouragement for all of us in this account of Peter's reinstatement?

**Every meeting with Jesus is based on forgiveness and love.**

Bill Smith 10 April 2004