

A conceptual image showing two hands, one from the top and one from the bottom, reaching towards a central bright light. The light creates a starburst effect with many thin, radiating lines extending outwards. The background is dark blue/black.

ENCOUNTERING GOD

2. LEAN INTO YOUR PATHWAY

ICEBREAKER

If this is a new group or there are new people, please take a moment to **introduce yourselves**.



To start off your small group, briefly share your response to the following questions:

Would you rather cook a big meal or call for take-out? Tell us why.

Share with your group.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Let's get a big picture of what we'll be learning today...

We've begun our journey into the seven spiritual pathways by briefly touching upon each one. You might already have an idea of what one or two pathways work best for you. But be aware that doesn't mean the other pathways aren't valuable to you. What's the best way to encounter God? For some it's through worship. For others it's through nature. No one pathway is better than the others, but each one is equally important. And you will likely have more than one way to connect with God. Over the course of this study you will not only see which one (s) work best for you, but you will discover and understand why it's so pivotal in the life of a Christ-follower to connect with God daily.



TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Tip: AVOID TALKING or TEACHING TOO MUCH. Small groups are designed for everyone to share and grow together.

Tip: CONFIDENTIALITY IS IMPORTANT. Confidentiality is the key to building trust in relationships. Here are a few mottos to remember to be confidential: “*What is said in small group, stays in small group.*” Nothing, nobody, never...Share nothing, to nobody, never” outside of the group.

ONLINE Tip: HYBRID GATHERING (ZOOM &/OR IN PERSON). If you’re meeting together on Zoom, familiarize yourself with the Zoom features on your electronic device. It is helpful for everyone to know where the mute button is located. Ask the attendees to self-mute to avoid environmental noise when someone else is talking & sharing. Doing this will help with the flow of your SG discussion time. If your group decides to meet in person, please practice safe social distancing by following the guidelines of being 6 feet apart and wearing a mask.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1.) The goal is to nourish our souls. When we know how to tap into our resources and environment in such a way that’s unique to us and draws us closer to God, we can begin to live out His commandments.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind” and “Love your neighbor as yourself.”...Jesus replied, “Do this and you will live.”

Luke 10:27, 28 (NIV)

Jesus is our best example. When we learn to love the Lord with our very being, we can then reach out to others and share His love. We do this by recognizing our “Gethsemane.”

What does it mean to recognize our Gethsemane? It means identifying our sacred space where we meet with God. The Garden of Gethsemane was a pivotal place for Jesus. It was in Gethsemane that Jesus spent His intimate time talking and listening to the Father. It was also the sacred space where Jesus found His marching orders to face His God-given assignment—the cross.

Do you have a sacred space where you can go to and spend time talking and listening to God? In other words, where is your Gethsemane? If you don’t have one yet, this message series—Encountering God—will help you identify that sacred space as you continue to remain engaged in this small group study.

2.) Read the following passage of scripture together:

In His grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

Romans 12:6-8 (NLT)

Just as God created us with different gift sets, He has also created us with different predispositions towards a pathway to encounter Him. But as you can see, some of the gifts apply to all of us. No one would argue that “Not all Christians are asked to serve” or that “Not all believers are called to give.” It’s the same way with our pathways. You may not be on the Relational Pathway, but that doesn’t mean you don’t need friends. You may not be on the Worship Pathway, but that doesn’t mean you should skip church.

**What are some essential things that every pathway should include?
(Example, reading the Bible regularly or sharing your faith)**

3.) Let’s focus on a couple more pathways. As we continue looking at the Spiritual Pathways, keep in mind that no one pathway is better than another, and you will probably encounter God best through multiple different ones. First, let’s see what the **“Creation Pathway”** looks like.

“The Creation Pathway”

They would rather be in nature than sitting indoors with air conditioning. Hiking, biking, swimming, all of that makes them feel closer to God. They come alive from head to toe whenever they are surrounded by natural splendor, whether it’s mountains, beaches, woods, or even the desert. There they find spiritual comfort and refreshment because they are reminded of the promise of God to restore our dry dusty souls through connecting with God in nature.

In the Bible, Jesus loved to encounter His Father in creation. Take a look:

Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.

Luke 5:16 (NLT)

Think of a time when you encountered God in His creation. What made it special? What did you learn about God from that encounter?

4.) Next, take a look at another pathway, the **“Worship Pathway.”**

“The Worship Pathway”

These people could put on some worship music or be a part of corporate worship gatherings where they sing songs of praise and enjoy the presence of God for hours on end. They may not be musical themselves, but they love the way their senses connect through praise and worship. This spiritual pathway breathes life to their soul.

In the Bible, King David was obviously aligned with God on this pathway. He wrote so many songs, and we have them recorded in the Psalms:

I will praise You, LORD! You always do right. I will sing about You, the LORD Most High.
Psalm 7:17 (CEV)

Honor the Lord for the glory of His name. Worship the Lord in the splendor of His holiness.
Psalm 29:2 (NLT)

This pathway may be the most essential, if you think about it. What would a church service be like without a time of worship? On the other hand, this doesn't come naturally to everybody. It's easy for us to judge those who may not love praise and worship.

Why is it important to not judge others for having a different spiritual pathway than us?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?



As we begin to discover our own particular pathway to encounter God, we've only just begun. Let's be mindful of the goal—to feed our souls so we can know God in a new way. This week, as you learn more about the different spiritual pathways highlighted in this study, remember to:

- Experiment with different pathways,
- Appreciate each pathway and
- Identify your go to sacred space—your "Gethsemane".

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Take a few minutes to close your time together with prayer and to pray for each other's prayer requests. Below is a sample prayer to read if you choose to. You can also choose to write down each other's prayer requests to remember throughout the week.



Sample Prayer:

"God, You are our AWESOME Creator! Everything You made was created for good. And we get to not only enjoy the goodness of all of Your creation, but we have the privilege and honor of getting to know our Maker, You. We were made to worship You. Thank You for each creative pathway that You designed so that we have a way of encountering You in a unique way. Help us identify our go to sacred space—our Gethsemane where we meet with you daily. In Jesus' name we pray, amen!"

Group Prayer Requests:

Name

Request

DAILY DEVOTIONS: DAY 1

SCRIPTURE...

*I've commanded you to be strong and brave. Don't ever be afraid or discouraged!
I am the LORD your God, and I will be there to help you wherever you go.*

Joshua 1:9 (CEV)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

DAILY DEVOTIONS: DAY 2

SCRIPTURE...

The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

Exodus 33:14 (NIV)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

SCRIPTURE...

I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised Him from the dead.

Philippians 3:10 (NLT)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

SCRIPTURE...

God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.

1 Corinthians 12:6 (NLT)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

SCRIPTURE...

I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.
Philippians 3:12-14 (NLT)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...
