

Mealtime Habits of the Messiah: 40 Encounters with Jesus

In the early drafts of the book, instead of the "Suggestions for Further Thought" sections, I'd composed Prayers based on the reading and encounter. Discussion questions have been very successful for Zondervan whereas written prayers are still viewed with some suspicion in some quarters. So we went with a discussion questionary sort of thing, but I thought some people might like to have the prayers as well. --Conrad

INTRODUCTION

ENCOUNTER 01 - Catering on Planet Earth

Father God, sometimes we feel like we've been out looking. The whole night. We're frustrated and tired. All we have to bring are the fish you gave us. Help us to realize that you're not all that interested in the fish -- the nouns -- the stuff. It's the verbs -- the giving and receiving -- that count.
Amen.

ENCOUNTER 02 - When on Earth, Do As the Earthlings Do

Father God, help us to see the truth of your word, to begin to appreciate what you've accomplished through your Son and to be transformed into his likeness.
Amen.

§ 1 : TEACHER AND MORE

ENCOUNTER 03 - Parables and Questions

Dear heavenly Father, we've read in Revelation that the very streets of heaven will be like gold. Help us to be streetwise in a way fit for those streets.
Amen.

ENCOUNTER 04 - Sermon on the Mount

Dear God, thank you for providing all of us, all over the globe throughout the centuries, with the teaching that we need to hear -- provided we have the ears to hear it. Teach us to ignore the itching in our earlobes, and to take your teaching more deeply inside of us.
Amen.

ENCOUNTER 05 - Who Do You Say I Am?

Father God, your Son made outrageous claims, but he lived out those claims. Help us Christians to similarly live out our claims.
Amen.

ENCOUNTER 06 - The Messianic Dinner Party

*Father God, king of the universe, help us to acknowledge your kingly authority now, but help us also to be living with each other as fellow subjects, as belonging to a community in the making. The kingdom of God is at hand!
Amen.*

ENCOUNTER 07 - Come to Preach?

*Lord, your kingdom is not a matter of words but of power. Jesus came not only as a prophet, bringing your words. He was your Word: prophet and king, priest and sacrifice. Thank you, Lord.
Amen.*

ENCOUNTER 08 - Why St Mark Would Have Hated Red-letter Bibles

*Thank you, Lord, for sending your Son. Thank you for changing our lives through the things that he did; help us to grow further through the things that he said.
Amen.*

§2 : MIRACLE-WORKER AND HEALER

ENCOUNTER 9 - Full of Miracles?

*Lord, give us critical faculties, give us open minds; help us steer safely between the dangerous rocks of 21st century biases and gullibility.
Amen.*

ENCOUNTER 10 - Walking on Water

*Lord God, sometimes you come to us in unexpected ways. Help us to be surprised without being terrified: to recognize you and welcome you into the boat.
Amen.*

ENCOUNTER 11 - Calming the Storm

*Thank you Lord, that you are in control of the Chaos and formlessness in our lives. Help us to trust in you, and not to panic, even when it seems like you're sleeping.
Amen.*

ENCOUNTER 12 - The Fig Tree

*Lord God, it's hard not to be impressed by lush leaves and evidence of personal growth. Help us, like you, to see past that in our own lives. Help us to put our resources into bearing fruit.
Amen.*

ENCOUNTER 13 - Supper for Thousands

Lord God, how easily we forget that all food, all existence is miraculous and amazing. Thank you for your creating and sustaining love.

Amen.

ENCOUNTER 14 - Ol' Blind Bart & Co.

Heavenly Father, you know us each by name, and deal with each of us differently. Help us to respond to your call, to your touch, to the mud you put in our faces, with grace, simplicity and trust.

Amen.

ENCOUNTER 15 - The Ungrateful Paralytic

Lord God, teach us to deal with reality — to accept responsibilities and to own our debts of gratitude. Forgive us when we blame you and others for things that go wrong and for forgetting to notice people's names when things go right.

When it comes down to it, we know that we have no idea why you chose us, except that perhaps it has more to do with our shortcomings than with our qualities. Change us.

Amen.

ENCOUNTER 16 - The Reverse Roofers

Dear God, give us something of that single-minded devotion and not just for our own needs, but for our friends and those around us. And when we give thanks for your good gifts, help us to see them as signs, to look past the things themselves to what they are pointers to: your greatness, your goodness, your love.

Amen.

ENCOUNTER 17 - Power Outage

Dear Lord, we know that we don't always understand you. Our guesses at how things work and our questions for you are naive and wrong-headed through and through. Thank you for your patience and love. Teach us to listen and respond even when it's not what we expected and not comfortable.

Amen.

ENCOUNTER 18 - Lazarus

Lord, you are stronger than death, you are truer than death. Help us when we fear death's sting and feel grief's pain. We can't call our friends back from the grave as Jesus could. But we are citizens of eternity even though we feel like children of dust.

Amen.

ENCOUNTER 19 - Chasing Out Demons

Thank you for being Lord over everything.

Amen.

ENCOUNTER 20

Legion

Father God, we praise you. There is no force, no being anywhere that is more powerful or more loving. Thank you for

*that love and protection.
Amen.*

ENCOUNTER 21 - Unless You People See Miracles...

*Lord God, we know that you can do anything you want. Sometimes that's a comfort to us and sometimes it confuses the daylight out of us. Embolden us to be willing to be agents of the miraculous God but help us never to second-guess you. Teach us how to be full of action, full of hope, but even more full of trust. Thank you, Lord.
Amen.*

§ 3 : SPIRITUAL AND RADICAL

ENCOUNTER 22 - Relationship with the Father

*Lord God, Creator of the Universe, help us to see how inappropriate it is for us to call you "dad" and help us see how much you want us to anyway. Thank you for your incomprehensible love.
Amen.*

ENCOUNTER 23 - Prayer: Public and Private

*Thank you Father for so often giving us so much more than our daily bread. Teach us to be grateful, teach us to be honest in our requests, help us to be open to your answers.
Amen.*

ENCOUNTER 24 - Keeping the Law: A Jewish Spirituality

*Blessed are you, oh King of the Universe. Thank you for preparing people through the Jewish Scriptures. Help us to take your holiness and your demands on us seriously.
Amen.*

ENCOUNTER 25 - Flouting the Law

*Lord, thank you for sending the King who changed everything about our relationship with you. Help us to listen well to your rules, without ever valuing them more than the relationship.
Amen.*

ENCOUNTER 26 - Suppers with Sinners

*The initiative has always been yours, Lord. But help us respond and allow you to take over as the host at our tables.
Amen.*

ENCOUNTER 27 - Criticism for Authorities

*You, Lord, pay no attention to outer appearances. Image means nothing to you. Help us to take off our designer sunglasses and get ready for you to look us in the eyes.
Amen.*

ENCOUNTER 28 - Busting Up the Temple

Father, help us to worship in spirit and in truth.

Amen.

ENCOUNTER 29 - A Humble Chutzpah

Help us Lord, to have something of Jesus' spirituality. Teach us to be like him yet worship him as your unique Son, the only author and perfecter of our faith.

Amen.

§ 4 : CRUCIFIED AND RESURRECTED

ENCOUNTER 30 - Did He Have To Die?

Father God, you sent your Son to us knowing how it had to turn out. Help us, Lord, to begin to understand the love you must have for us to do that and help us to live out our gratitude.

Amen.

ENCOUNTER 31 - As a Ransom for Many

O Lord and Maker of the Universe, forgive us when we want to understand you on our own terms rather than yours. Help us to learn your ways even when they're not our ways. Help us to mean what we say when we call Good Friday good. Thank you.

Amen.

ENCOUNTER 32 - The Last Supper

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, it is for us that you took on flesh and blessed it in the Incarnation, and for us that you allowed it to be broken and given in the Crucifixion for all of us. Help us to be grateful and live out our thankfulness in all we do and say.

Amen.

ENCOUNTER 33 - The Garden at the Center of Time

Lord, help us to stand awake, alert and prayerful alongside others in their struggles, knowing that even Jesus himself came close to despair. And help us as we work toward bringing our own wills in line with yours. Thank you for hearing and replying, even when it's not with the answers we wanted.

Amen.

ENCOUNTER 34 - A Tale of Two Wash Basins

We know that this was your hour, Lord Jesus, the beginning of the culmination of all that you worked toward. King of the universe and suffering servant, help us to be truly grateful and accept you now.

Amen.

ENCOUNTER 35 - The Cross

Lord, we understand so little of what you went through, yet even from the little we do understand we know our redemption had a serious cost. Help us to value each other as people you love. Thank you for loving us that much. Amen.

ENCOUNTER 36 - Missing? The Women at the Tomb

Lord God, the mystery of the resurrection still has the power to amaze and confuse us when we don't just take it for granted. Thank you for the gift of your Son and for the message you gave by raising him from the dead. Help us to be faithful in remembering his death and resurrection, and give us hearts quick to recognize your voice and your actions whether we hear you say our name or just hear others tell of you. Amen.

ENCOUNTER 37 - Risen!

Dear Father God, thank you for raising Jesus from the dead, for showing him alive. You demonstrated not only your power over what seems to us final and inevitable, but also your vindication and love for your Son and for us. Amen.

ENCOUNTER 38 - Preparing for Take-Off

In a way, Lord, the whole Bible is about what you began to do in this world you've made and watched over. Thank you for being the author and now the center of space/time. Help each of us in our way to be part of your continuing work, and help us to look forward to that day when all the dull stuff is over — the never-ending weekend! Amen.

CONCLUSION

ENCOUNTER 39 - The Imitation of Christ... or Not?

Father God, help us to become more like your Son every day; thank you for loving us and coming after us just as we are. Amen.

ENCOUNTER 40 - Back to Earth in Time for Supper

Lord God, help us to respond to that knock at the door; give us a willingness to clear our tables and accept the food that you have sent us. How can we refuse? Amen.