

Up Close and Personal — Encounters with Jesus

Leader's Notes and Bible Passages

Available Online

By Shari Miller



Faith Talk: How would you explain a “defining moment” in any person’s life? Try to arrive at a group definition and write it below. Share one such moment from your life with a partner or in a small group.

As we consider three people from biblical accounts who had defining encounters with Jesus, we will explore how the life of each person was changed and what significance that has for each one of us.

Opening Prayer: Dear Father in heaven, we praise You that You have given us life here on earth, but more important, life eternal through the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Your Son Jesus. Our sins are forgiven for Jesus’ sake. Continue to direct and guide us as Your Holy Spirit empowers us to share the Good News of salvation in our everyday lives. We boldly ask that You bless our study of Your Word. In Jesus’ great name we pray, Amen.

Sins Forgiven!

Read **Mark 2:1–12**. Describe Jesus’ life-changing encounter with the paralytic man. What two gifts did Jesus give to the paralytic man?

If time permits: How might society have viewed this paralyzed man? How might today’s society view the paralytic?

What do you believe was the defining moment in this encounter with Jesus? Why was the forgiveness of his sins the most significant moment for this paralytic? How might this forgiveness have changed his life?

How do our sins paralyze us? What words and phrases in the following Bible passages describe our sin and its effects?

Psalm 25:11

Psalm 38:4

Ephesians 2:1–3

The Good News is that Jesus meets each of us by grace “up close and personal” on the cross of Calvary.



bible study

What do the following passages assure each believer in Jesus Christ?

Psalm 103:12

Isaiah 1:18

Jeremiah 31:34

John 19:30

Faith Talk: How does this “up close and personal” forgiveness through Jesus Christ specifically change your life? Share with a partner or in a small group.

New Life Given!

Read **Luke 7:11–15**. Describe Jesus’ encounter with the widow from Nain and her son. What was the defining moment in this encounter?

If time permits: In the space of a very short time, the widow of Nain experienced many emotions. Identify some of those emotions.

What do you speculate the widow did following this up close and personal encounter with Jesus? What about her son?

How does our Savior Jesus give us new life? See **John 3:16**.

How does the Holy Spirit keep us in this life-giving faith? See **Romans 10:17**, **Titus 3:5**, and **Matthew 26:26–28**.

Grief ... to joy! Read **Ephesians 2:4–10**. How are our lives changed through the new life that Jesus has given to us in Christ Jesus? What actions in our lives show others this life-giving change?

Faith Talk: How does the knowledge that we inherit eternal life for the sake of Jesus affect our life here on earth? Share with a partner or in a small group.

A Bold New Vision!

Read **John 4:5–26**. Describe this up close and personal encounter with Jesus. How did Jews feel about Samaritans in **verse 9**? How did society of the day treat women? In light of these facts, how might this Samaritan woman have felt about herself?

Read **John 4:28**. After the Samaritan woman's defining moment with Jesus and once she realized that Jesus was the Messiah, what did she do? What might that water jar have represented to the woman? Why could she leave it behind?

Read **John 4:28–29; 39–42**. What was this woman's bold new vision?

Faith Talk: What “water jars” can hinder our sharing of the Good News of Jesus Christ?

What commission and what promise does God give to His children in **Matthew 28:18–20**?

What promise and what evangelism plan does Jesus give His followers in **Acts 1:8**?

Faith Talk: What can be our bold new vision for sharing the Good News about Jesus in our homes, in our communities, and in our world?

Conclusion: Defining moments in life might be viewed as those events that help to define who we are and how we live our lives. The Holy Spirit works in us through Word and Sacraments to give us faith and to nurture that

faith. We are God's children. Our thoughts and actions are defined by our Savior as we follow Him, the perfect example. May we have our Lord's peace and joy as the Spirit helps us to boldly share the Good News about Jesus in our homes, in our communities, and in our world.

Faith Walk: Rejoice every morning this week in the salvation you receive because of Jesus' saving work.

Find out your baptismal date — the most defining moment of your life! Thank God for making you His own dear child.

Identify people in your life who need to hear the Good News about Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to share that news and your hope for eternal life. As a group, pray for and support missionaries and their families around the world (see www.lcms.org for more information).

Read about “Women Disciples” in *The Lutheran Study Bible*, page 1726.

Close by Singing: “Jesus, Lead Thou On” (*LSB* #718; *LW* #386; *TLH* #410) or “Lord Take My Hand and Lead Me” (*LSB* #722; *LW* #512)

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