

A QUIET ENCOUNTER!

Scripture used: [Luke 18:9-14 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

Pastor Hurmon continued our sermon series *Encounters!* as we prayerfully approach Easter Sunday. We are tracing the path of Jesus and the disciples as they headed toward Jerusalem. Like the disciples, we are struggling to understand the core message that Jesus wanted to share. He knew He was going to die, and yet He didn't waver or run away. Jesus knew that His death was the only way to fulfill the scriptures, defeat death and sin forever, and open up the space for each of us to have a direct encounter with a living, loving God. Pastor Hurmon shared a powerful story of NBCCer Matt Coleman, who just had such an encounter. Matt woke up after a night of revelry and living it up in Las Vegas, and felt the emptiness of life without God. He was convinced that his life was off track, even though he was successful in the eyes of the world, with a great education and lucrative career. Matt changed course, and within months was brought to NBCC by his girlfriend (now wife) Christine. They have two wonderful children and are thriving as a Christ-centered family, thanks to Matt's quiet encounter!

KEY POINTS

1. **Prayer is a great place for quiet encounters.** Jesus gave us the example of two men – the Pharisee and the tax collector – praying simple, short, conversational prayers. They didn't need to set aside a lot of time, or memorize a fancy prayer. This is a great model for us. God wants us to bring things to Him throughout the day. We might be stressing out about a meeting, or worried about paying bills, or trying to fix a leaky faucet. These are all opportunities to turn to God and speak directly from the heart. What God prizes above all when we communicate with Him is honesty and humility. This is what it means to do life with Him.
2. **Our encounter may be so quiet we don't even realize it happened.** It's easy to assume that meeting God will be an obvious, life-changing event. But sometimes we can't see what God is doing. In Jesus' parable of the tax collector, the man didn't hear back from God after his prayer. He did end up being made right, but there was no obvious sign that it happened. Pastor Hurmon offered another example from the life of the prophet Elisha. Sometimes we just don't know how to look for God's presence at work in our lives. When Elisha was surrounded by his enemies, his servant panicked. The young man naturally thought they would both be killed. It wasn't until God opened his eyes in [II Kings 6:17 \(NLT\)](#) that the young man saw God's army "filled with horses and chariots of fire" protecting Elisha.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Jesus desperately wants to have an encounter with each of us. Sometimes we can miss the potential for an encounter because it's quiet, rather than dramatic. In this week's scripture the tax collector walked away justified, but it's possible he didn't even know it! We can use simple, direct, conversational prayer as a powerful tool to encounter God. He wants us to think of Him constantly, and to bring our fears, concerns, hopes, and dreams to Him. Remember: God loves you! As you think about the major changes in your life, which ones occurred gradually, and which ones occurred dramatically? Was there a gradual change that actually had long-lasting effects?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Both the Pharisee and tax collector were sinners. The tax collector would have been considered a "worse sinner" than the Pharisee, but he was the one who walked away justified before God. Why? Jesus teaches that what matters to God is the posture of our hearts - as you consider [Luke 18:9-14 \(NLT\)](#), how do you know the attitude of the hearts of the tax collector and Pharisee? Consider that there are times we may be more like the tax collector, and other times we may be more like the Pharisee. How can we learn from both figures in this account in Scripture? Now consider this question: What does the pattern of God's grace look like in your life?
- 3) **DO** - Continue to set aside time each day to pray, reflect, and read the Bible. This week take the example of the tax collector's short prayer and consider these two prayers to say to God each day: "Lord open my eyes to see and experience you!", and "O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner." Also remember to invite family and friends to [The Encounter](#), our Eastern celebration on Sunday April 17th. Surveys indicate that 90% of people say they will attend if invited by someone they know and trust, so what are you waiting for?