

Small Groups @ TBC Sermon Discussion Notes

Date of Sermon: September 11th 2016

Speaker: David Lawrence

Title: Encounter 1: Gathering

Introduction: This is the first talk in a series in which we will explore the main purpose of our gatherings as church, namely, to encounter God together. Every meeting should be seen as an encounter with the living God, since where even two or three gather, Jesus has promised to be present (Matthew 18:20)

Review: Invite one or more who have heard the talk to reflect on what they recall, and what 'struck them' at the time.

Read: Hebrews 12:18-29

Reflect:

- What response did the Old Testament people of Israel have to encountering God? (12:21).
 - Why would God seem "terrifying" to them?
- What are the differences between God's peoples' encounter with him in verses 18-21, and their encounter in 22-24?
- See how populated the place of gathered worship is! Who is present? (vs22-24)?
 - NOTES on 22-24 (*leader: you can skip looking up these references if you are short of time*)
 - Mount Zion = the place of true worship (see Isaiah 60:14)
 - Heavenly Jerusalem = the perfect dwelling-place of God with people (see Rev 21:2,3)
 - Thousands of angels (see Deut 33:2)
 - Festive gathering = joy replaces the fear of 18-21
 - Assembly of the firstborn = the church, the brothers and sisters of the firstborn Son (Colossians 1:15)
 - Spirits of the righteous = those who have died in faith and are now alive in heaven awaiting resurrection (see Hebrews 11:39-12:1)
- Above all, "you have come to Jesus". What is the significance of that for our gathered worship? (see Hebrews 4:15-16; 10:19-22)

Leaders: feel free to be selective and creative with your use of these notes.

Don't feel you have to use all of the material, but do try to keep the shape of Review – Read – Reflect – Respond and **DO make room for the 'And Finally' questions!**

Thornbury Baptist Church:

Following the Way of Jesus: Loving God - Loving One Another - Loving Neighbour & World

- How would our worship experience be transformed if we truly believed that encountering God as a “consuming fire” (v29) was what we were doing?
- How do we prepare for such an encounter (v28)?
 - What does it mean to worship *with reverence*? How do we ‘revere’ God?
 - What causes us to *stand in awe of God*?
 - How could we arrive at a worship gathering with reverence and awe for God already in our hearts?
- In practical terms:
 - How could we individually prepare more adequately for our church gatherings to be a richer ‘encounter’ with God.
 - How could we run our meetings differently (specifically Sundays and Home Groups) to embrace the goal of genuine encounter with God?

And finally:

As you conclude, ask each person:

- What is the main thing you are taking away as an action point?
- How can we pray for you?
- Is there anything we can check on next time we meet?

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