

ENCOUNTER ONE: GOD

Question One

In our world success is found in money, fame, intellect, beauty and athletic ability. As men and women seek to define their identity and role in life, the world encourages success in these areas. As humans, we can't help but ask the basic questions about the purpose of our world and our lives. We wonder,

“Why does anything exist?”

“Who am I?”

“Where did I come from?”

“Why am I here?”

“Where am I going?”

These are the questions we often ask as we seek to find greater significance to our lives than simply living and dying. Can you identify with this search for significance through the above questions? Would you add any other questions that college students are asking today?

Question Two

All of these questions are answered when we come to understand that God exists, He is knowable, and He is active in accomplishing His purpose. As Christians, we can look to God's Word to find these answers. The Bible is the authoritative, inerrant Word of God in which He communicates the truths of His character and purpose to His people. Read Jeremiah 9:23–24, where God reveals His desire for his people in light of the pursuits of worldly men.

All of our desires and longings for significance and purpose can be met in knowing and loving God and understanding His plan in our lives. What comes to mind when you think of God?

Question Three

Let's look at what the Bible says about who God is:

GOD'S PERSON

Malachi 3:6 _____

Isaiah 26:4 _____

Psalms 93:2 _____

Psalms 139:7-12 _____

GOD'S POWER

Hebrews 4:13 _____

Psalms 90:1-2 _____

Job 42:1-2 _____

GOD'S PERFECTION

Leviticus 19:2 _____

Nahum 1:1-3 _____

1 John 4:7-8 _____

Psalms 103:8 _____

Question Four

God is a personal God, and as a personal God there are some things that are more important than others. Based on these verses, what do we see as central to God's heart throughout scripture?

Genesis 1:26

Genesis 1:29–31

Genesis 3:13–19

Deuteronomy 14:2

John 10:10

ENCOUNTER TWO: THE GOSPEL

Question One

People today often claim that the human race possesses a predominantly good nature. Those who hold this view usually believe that humans do have some flaws, but these flaws are only blemishes that should not be an overwhelming focus in life. Write down what each of these verses says about man's sin.

I Kings 8:46

Psalms 51:5

Romans 3:9-12

Romans 3:23

I John 1:8-10

Write a short summary of the view of the human race the Bible presents compared to our culture's view. Which view do you personally tend to believe?

Question Two

Once a Biblical perspective of the condition of the human race has been understood, we must ask two questions of the Bible. First, what are the implications for humans in their relationship with God due to their sin? Secondly, why do these implications exist? Use the following verses to help answer these questions.

Genesis 3:8-22

Romans 5:12

Romans 6:23

Ephesians 2:1–3

Colossians 2:13

Romans 8:7–8

Based on the verses, write a couple of sentences in response to these two questions (what is the result of our sin and why?)

Question Three

Many people attempt to erase the implications of their sin against God by being good, moral people. These people simply believe that due to their good deeds, in which they seek to honor God, they will find God's approval. Study the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax-collector from Luke 18:9–14. Which individual in the parable found God's approval? Why?

If trusting in our own personal goodness is not sufficient for humans to restore their relationship with God, then how may this separation be bridged? Please read and meditate on Ephesians 2:8–9 in developing your answer.

Question Four

When a person enters into a relationship with Christ an exchange takes place.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21. What are the two things that take place between Christ and the believer?

Understanding this exchange (that our sins are forgiven and we are made righteous) is crucial to our understanding of why faith in Jesus' work on the cross is sufficient for our salvation. Read the following verses, then write out what it means that "He who had no sin became sin for us."

Galatians 3:13

I Peter 2:24

I Peter 3:18

Based on these verses, as well as the following verses, write out what it means that we become His righteousness.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Galatians 2:20-21

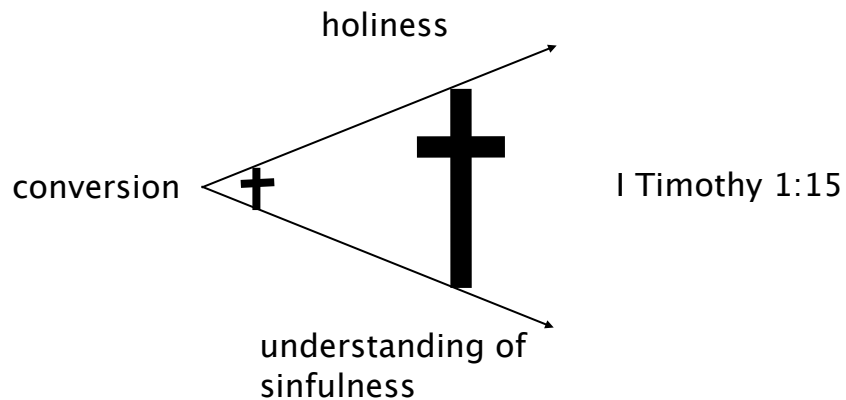
Romans 8:1

After reflecting on these truths, prayerfully evaluate your own life. Can you identify ways in which you are not living in light of who you are as a new creation?

Question Five

Paul says in I Timothy 1:15, “It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.” As a Christian, do you find yourself sharing Paul’s attitude concerning sin? Or do you identify more with the Pharisee who placed his confidence in his own good deeds? Write out some of your thoughts as you prayerfully evaluate your attitude toward sin in your own life.

The diagram below illustrates an irony in the christian life: as we grow in our relationship with God, our understanding of our sinfulness increases, as well as our knowledge of God’s holiness. Therefore, the realization of our need for the cross continually increases in our lives.



Question Six

Though we are fully justified before God at the point of salvation, sanctification is the lifelong process of becoming more like Christ. It is easy for Christians to fall into the mindset that the gospel of God's grace is necessary for salvation, but not as relevant throughout the sanctification process. Read the following verses.

Col. 2:6–7

I Thes. 5:23–24

Titus 2:11–14

Based on these verses, as well as the enclosed article “The Transforming Power of the Gospel,” write down some thoughts on why the message of the gospel of grace is crucial in the daily life of a Christian?

ENCOUNTER THREE: LORDSHIP

Question One

In the first set of questions, we outlined that salvation comes by grace through faith in Christ alone. As Christians, there is a moment in time when we place our faith in Jesus to be our Savior. At this moment of conversion, God extends several promises to the believer. From the following verses make some observations concerning the Holy Spirit. What is God's promise concerning the Holy Spirit to all who believe in Christ?

John 3:3-8

John 7:37-39

John 14:16-18

Ephesians 1:13-14

Titus 3:5-6

II Corinthians 5:17

Question Two

As new creatures in Christ through faith, God's promise is to live within us through His Holy Spirit. What benefits do believers have due to the presence of God's Spirit in their lives? From the following verses, what two roles do you see the Spirit perform in the Christian's life?

John 14:26-27

John 15:26-27

John 16:13-15

Acts 1:6-8

I Corinthians 2:12–13

I Corinthians 12:4–7

II Timothy 1:7

Question Three

The primary role of the Spirit's ministry in the life of a Christian is to instruct them in the truths of God and empower them to live out these truths. Read Galatians 5:22–23. What does the Bible teach are the products of the teaching and empowerment of the Holy Spirit?

Question Four

In a culture where knowledge about Christ is common, it is easy to lose what it means to be a Christian. Read the following story.

Hugh grew up attending church. He understands that Jesus died for sinners so that they might be in right relationship with God. However, Hugh has little desire to follow after Jesus. Hugh will admit that his actions do not set him apart from those around him who claim not to believe in Jesus.

Do you believe that it is possible for a person, like Hugh, to be a Christian without the evidence of the Spirit's work in their life? Write out your thoughts on this issue.

Read Romans 8:12–14. What does this passage teach about those who live according to the flesh and those who live according to the Spirit?

Verses for further study:

Matthew 7:17–23

Romans 6:1–2

Luke 9:23–24

I John 2:3–4

John 14:15&21

I John 3:6&9

II Corinthians 5:14–15

Titus 1:16

Question Five

Many people would then ask the question, “If the fruits of the Spirit are necessary in order to be a Christian, then am I somehow obligated to work for my salvation? Did you not say that salvation comes by grace through faith?” How do you believe that fruit and works relate to saving faith? Write out your thoughts on this issue.

The following exercise will be completed and discussed during this week's Bible study.

These first two views are incorrect views of faith and works.

_____ → _____ (Romans 6:1-2; James 2:14)

_____ + _____ → _____ (Ephesians 2:8,9)

This is the only view that is biblical.

_____ → _____ + _____ (Ephesians 2:10)

"Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone." Martin Luther

Question Six

Read the following situation. Pat prayed to receive Christ when she was 19 years old. She immediately involved herself with many church activities and Bible studies due to the joy of her newfound salvation. Her life seemed to display the work of God's Spirit in her heart in many ways. However, in the past year, Pat has drifted from her walk with Christ. Where she used to be very zealous to follow Jesus, she now does not think that God is relevant to her life. Pat's lifestyle now resembles the way she lived before her conversion experience. In your opinion, what is the deal with Pat? Did Pat somehow lose her salvation? Read John 10:27-30 and Philippians 1:6. Is it possible for someone to lose his or her salvation? Now, read the parable of the sower from Luke 8:4-15. Which of the four seeds do you believe has saving faith?

ENCOUNTER FOUR: THE WORD

Question One

Today, there are many differing opinions on the Bible's authority and trustworthiness. Christians have historically believed two fundamental truths about the Bible. First, they believe that God has written the Scriptures through man. Secondly, Christians believe that the Bible is the authoritative source of truth. In the following verses, what do the scriptures say about itself?

2 Timothy 3:16,17

2 Peter 1:20-21

Psalm 119:160

John 17:17

Question Two

To many, God appears as a distant and unknowable being. Yet to the Christian, God has made himself known through a personal relationship with His Son. From the following verses, what is the source of knowledge of God and Jesus Christ?

1 Corinthians 15:3,4

Acts 18:28

Acts 17:2,3

Luke 24:27

2 Timothy 3:15

What do these verses teach you about the importance of the scriptures in knowing God?

Question Three

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses made this statement about God's Word, 'They are not just idle words for you, they are your life.' In the following verses, what are the specific ways that God's Word impacts our lives?

2 Timothy 3:15-17

1 Peter 2:2

Psalm 119:105

Hebrews 4:12

John 17:17

Question Four

The scriptures give us models to show us the importance of spending time with God. What do each of the following say or illustrate about how frequently this should be done and how it affects our lives?

Acts 17:11

Joshua 1:8

Psalms 5:3

Mark 1:35

What are two main activities that these passages emphasize as elements of our time alone with God?

Question Five

RC Sproul, a well-known bible teacher/author states one barrier to spending time with God in the following,

“We fail in our duty to study God’s Word not so much because it is difficult to understand, not so much because it is dull and boring, but because it is work. Our problem is not a lack of intelligence or a lack of passion. Our problem is that we are lazy.”

Would you consider this to be an accurate statement? What are some other barriers that keep you from getting into the scriptures?

From the following verses, what are the benefits of overcoming these barriers?

Jeremiah 15:16

2 Timothy 3:15

Joshua 1:8

Question Six

The following is one example of how to spend time alone with the Lord.

1. Begin with prayer, asking the Lord to give you insight into His Word. David prayed, “open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Thy law” (Psalm 119:18).
2. Look up the following verse and write it in the space provided. As you write it, consider what the passage is saying.

2 Timothy 2:15

3. Circle and define the key words in the passage above using your own definition or a dictionary.

Key Word:

Definition:

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4. Write out the main thought of the passage below.

5. Write out a few specific actions that you can apply to your own life today.

6. Pray and ask the Lord to help you apply this verse to your life.

THE CHALLENGE: Begin to set aside time everyday in which you can follow the example above with other verses.

The following suggestions might be helpful.

- ★ Set aside a consistent time each day.
- ★ Set aside a place that is quiet and away from any distractions.
- ★ Remind yourself of the specific application that you received at a later time. (For example, if you spend time with the Lord in the mornings, review them before you go to sleep that night.)
- ★ Share with others specific things that you are learning from your time with God.
- ★ Verses to study:

Jeremiah 15:16

Mark 1:35

2 Timothy 3:15

2 Timothy 3:15-17

Joshua 1:8

1 Peter 2:2-3

Acts 17:11

Psalm 119:105

Joshua 1:8

Hebrews 4:12

Psalm 5:3

John 17:17

ENCOUNTER FIVE: PRAYER

Question One

Martin Luther once said, “As it is the business of tailors to make clothes and of cobblers to mend shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray.” As you read the following passages of Scripture, notice the instructions about prayer and examples of prayer from the Bible.

Psalm 5:1–3

Matthew 14:23

Luke 18:1–8

Acts 4:31

Romans 10:1

Ephesians 6:18

Colossians 4:2

Question Two

EM Bounds, author of *Power Through Prayer*, once said, “Stop! Pause! Consider! What are we? What are we doing? ...Praying to God! The great God, the Maker of all worlds, the Judge of all men! What reverence! What simplicity! What sincerity! What truth in the inward parts is demanded! How real we must be! How hearty! Prayer to God: the most noble exercise, the loftiest effort of man, the most real thing!” Now ask yourself these questions in relation to your own prayer life: How earnestly do I pray? What do I pray for? How long do I pray? How often do I pray?

Question Three

Read the following passages of scripture, and discover what the Bible says about our plight as human beings.

II Corinthians 4:16

Romans 3:10–12

Romans 7:18–19

Psalms 14:1–3

Psalms 143:2

II Corinthians 4:8–9

Question Four

The relationship between God and us is similar to that of a master to his servant. A servant is completely dependent on his master for all of his needs. Whether it is food, shelter, clothing, etc., a servant goes without these things unless his master provides them for him. Read the following verses, and notice God's provision for us in light of our desperate condition.

Philippians 4:19

Romans 8:31–32

II Corinthians 9:8

Psalms 123:2

Psalms 18:1–3

Psalms 36:5–9

Question Five

In Matthew 6:7–8 Jesus says, “And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him.” The question that naturally arises in response to Jesus’ words is, “If God already knows what I plan to ask for in prayer, then why does He even bother to ask me to pray?” Read the story of Abraham and Abimelech in Genesis chapter 20. What does this passage have to say about why God asks us to pray when He already knows what we will ask for?

Another passage on this topic is:

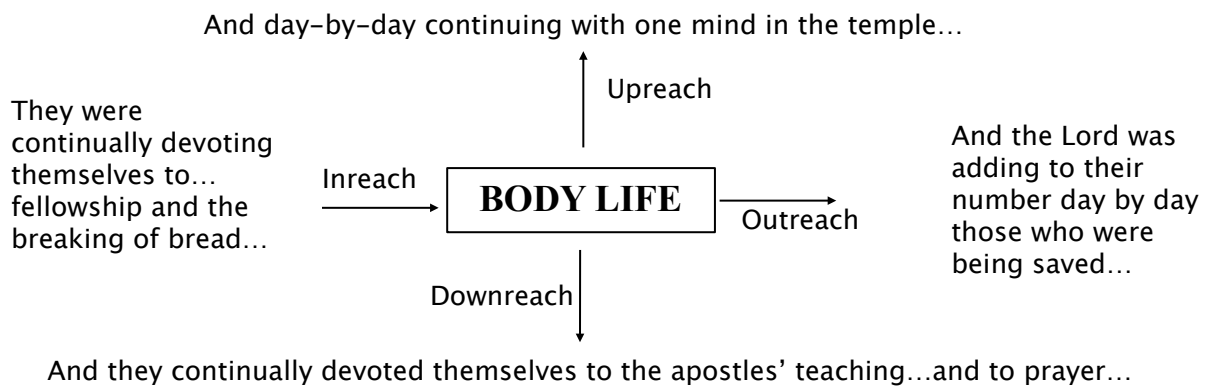
James 5:16–18

ENCOUNTER SIX: THE BODY OF CHRIST

Question One

Read Ephesians 2:19–22. From this scripture, we see that one of the many blessings of salvation is becoming a member of the family of God, the Body of Christ. The universal body of Christ is composed of all believers from across all time and manifests itself in local churches. What does this mean for the present day Christian? Read Acts 2:41–47 and Acts 4:32–37 in order to observe how the early church lived as a community of believers. What were some of the key elements practiced in their lives together?

The following illustration represents the 4 components necessary for healthy body life based on Acts 2:41–47:



Question Two

Upreach is the gathering of a community of believers to worship God in all His fullness. In Hebrews 10:23–25 we are commanded to not give up meeting together. Why do you think God calls His people to worship together as a community?

Hebrews 10:23–25

I Timothy 4:13

Question Three

Downreach is the process by which the believer is equipped and trained with knowledge and skills for service in the Body of Christ. There are many members of the Body, but all the members do not have the same function. According to the following verses, what are some of the roles of the members of the Body?

Romans 12:3–8

Ephesians 4:11,12

I Corinthians 12:12–26

Question Four

Outreach is a vital part of a Christian community for by it believers express obedience to the Great Commission of Christ. This concept is covered more in depth in a following section.

Inreach encompasses how fellow brothers and sisters relate to one another. Examine the following verses and draw some principles about the interaction between members.

I Peter 1:22

Hebrews 3:13

Ephesians 4:29–32

Question Five

The Body of Christ is responsible for encouraging, serving, loving and forgiving one another. It is also necessary for other qualities to be present in order to have healthy body life. Read these verses to conclude what they are and how to carry them out.

Proverbs 27:17

Matthew 18:15-17

Luke 17:3

Galatians 6:1,2

Question Six

According to the verses below, how has God set up structure and order in the Body of Christ?

Hebrews 13:7

Hebrews 13:17

I Timothy 5:17

ENCOUNTER SEVEN: EVANGELISM

Question One

What is evangelism?

Question Two

Evangelism is sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others. Why is evangelism necessary? Who is called to share the gospel?

II Thessalonians 1:9

II Corinthians 5:20

I Peter 2:9

Question Three

There are many different perceptions about how the gospel should be communicated. Look up these verses and record the methods the Bible tells us should be employed.

Matthew 5:16

Romans 10:14,15

Psalm 66:16

I Peter 2:12

Question Four

Why does the idea of evangelism tend to make some people uncomfortable?

II Corinthians 2:15,16

II Timothy 3:12

Luke 6:22

John 3:19,20

Matthew 10:34

Question Five

How is success in evangelism determined?

I Corinthians 3:6,7

Acts 20:24

Isaiah 55:11

Question Six

What tools do you have at your disposal to live in obedience to the Lord's command to share the gospel?

Take a few moments to write out your testimony.

ENCOUNTER EIGHT: DISCIPLESHIP

Question One

'Disciple' means follower. Some people might think that becoming a Christian is a final goal. How is it really just the beginning of a new road?

II Peter 3:18

I Peter 2:2

I Corinthians 14:20

Hebrews 6:1

Philippians 1:6

Question Two

Developing in any area requires a measure of training. What are examples of this (professionals, athletes, fine arts, military, etc.)? How does the Christian life correspond to this?

II Peter 3:18

I Timothy 4:7-8

II Timothy 2:3-6

Question Three

The road of growth is called discipleship. What did discipleship look like in the ministry of Christ? In the ministry of Paul? How can we follow these models in our lives today?

Mark 3:13-14

John 3:22

I Thessalonians 2:8

I Corinthians 11:1

I Thessalonians 1:6

Question Four

Followers of Jesus can be found on every continent and virtually every country on the earth. What strategy did Jesus pass on to his disciples to spread the gospel and reach the world?

Matthew 4:19

II Timothy 2:2

Question Five

Genesis communicates God's plan to fill the earth with His people. How is discipleship part of this becoming reality?

Genesis 1:28

Matthew 28:18-20

Acts 1:8

Revelation 5:9

Question Six

What personal application can you make in your life to be involved in discipleship for your personal growth? To help others? To reach the world for Christ?