

God Encounters: The Impact of Personally Experiencing God

✠ Introduction

- Have you ever had something that you have heard stories about other people's experiences with, but have not experienced yourself?
 - Such as:
 - A ride on the new roller coaster at Six Flags
 - Skydiving
 - Going to a foreign country
- So often in our lives we see people experiencing religion whether that is the religious traditions of their family and friends or just some view of God as the cosmic gift-giver or the great Judge and Condemner of our every move.
- My question for you tonight is: Have you ever personally experienced Jesus Christ?
- Not religion or some cool spiritual experience, but have you experienced Jesus.
- If we ever come to the place where we truly experience Jesus Christ, we will never be the same.
- Tonight, we are going to look at the lives of two people who had radical life changing experiences with God, and the impact that it had on the rest of their lives.

✠ Jacob's Encounter- **Genesis 32**

- Background:
 - Jacob- named the "heel-catcher" due to holding onto Esau's heel at birth (Genesis 25: 26)
 - Going to meet Esau
 - Afraid because Esau has 400 men with him
 - Jacob has a reputation of stealing from Esau:
 - Birthright
 - Blessing

- **Genesis 32: 9-12-** Jacob is crying out to God because he is afraid of Esau
 - This is the first time that Jacob seeks God
 - God has come to him in a dream, but Jacob has never cried out to God until this point
 - Jacob is sending Esau gifts so that Esau might have mercy on him
 - The Encounter (**Genesis 32: 24-31**):
 - Jacob is alone – **v. 24**
 - “A man”- the manifestation of God in human form
 - God does not crush Jacob- **v. 25**
 - God could have clearly won, but his desire was not to crush Jacob
 - Jacob wants God’s blessing- **v. 26**
 - “What is your name?” – **v. 27**
 - The last time Jacob was asked this question was by Isaac and he lied and stole Esau’s blessing (Genesis 27: 18)
 - Jacob receives a new name “Israel”- **v. 28**
 - “God fights” or “fought with God and man”
 - “In wrestling with Jacob, God appeared in human form and deprived Jacob of his natural strength, but Jacob emerged the victor by clinging to God for blessing.” – R. C. Sproul
 - Impact of the Encounter
 - New Name and Identity- **v. 28**
 - Jacob is no longer known as a deceiver who tricked people and lied to get ahead but is given a new name coming out of his encounter with God.
 - Jacob is also stripped of his pride. He is no longer the one in control of making his own life all about him. He has to be wrestled by

God in order to be stripped of his pride in order that God could bless him and work through him.

- Will Live the Rest of His Life Marked by the Encounter- **v. 31**
 - Every time Israel will go to take a step, he will be reminded of this experience he had with God.

‡ Saul's Encounter (**Acts 9**)

- Background:

- **Acts 9: 1-2**

- Saul is the holy Jewish leader on a mission to rid the Jewish race from this madness about Jesus Christ.
 - Saul sees himself as a man on a mission from God to protect the purity of God's chosen people.
 - He is on the way to do his job and to bust some more of the Followers of the Way

- Saul's Encounter (**Acts 9: 3-9**):

- Saul meets this Jesus who he has been persecuting.
 - God strikes him blind.

- Impact of the Encounter:

- Goes from a Persecutor to a Follower
 - **Acts 9: 1-2**- Picture of Saul on his mission to take out the Followers of the Way
 - **Acts 9: 20-22**- He starts preaching that Jesus Christ is the Way.

‡ Applications:

- Are you marked by an encounter with Jesus Christ?

- Lifestyle Marked by the Way
 - Jacob was marked by a limp that would be with him the rest of his life, and Saul was marked by a revelation of who God really was.
 - Christians- followers of "the Way"- **Acts 9: 2**

- “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” – Jesus (John 14: 6)
- Living as a follower of “the Way” means that our lives as a follower of Jesus Christ should be lived in the radical way that Jesus lived.
- As followers of the Way our lives should show the glory and grace of Jesus Christ to others.
 - Picture of Moses (Exodus 34: 29)- “the skin of his face shown because he had been talking with God.”
- A Change in Identity
 - **Romans 8: 1-11**
 - There is freedom from your sin and your past.
 - The same Spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead lives inside of you and gives you the power and strength to live a victorious Christian life as you seek to reflect Jesus Christ to others.
- Have you ever truly had an encounter with Jesus Christ?
 - You may have a family heritage marked by strong religious roots, you may have experienced church and religion your entire life, but the question you must ask is: Have you experienced Jesus Christ?
 - Gospel presentation