

Encountering God Series Bible Study 4 – Bow Down!

Introduction:

Optional: this is an opportunity to recap and reflect on previous weeks as an introduction to this week.

- Week 1: Be reconciled, Matt 5:23-24 – any reflections, troubling questions?
- Week 2: Be humble, Luke 18:9-14 – anything?
- Week 3: Praise! Psalm 95:1-6

Reflection

This needs one of the group to be the narrator ... read slowly, pause between sentences.

Psalm 95 is a liturgical psalm, used on the occasions when pilgrims made the journey to Jerusalem for various festivals. Close your eyes and try to imagine yourself entering in through the city gates after a journey of a day or two. What's the weather like? What can you see, hear, smell? How do you feel? What are you looking forward to?

As you approach the Temple environs, you hear a voice calling:

*Come let us sing for joy to the Lord;
Let us shout aloud to the rock of our salvation.
Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.*

You hear the strains of music and the voices of the choir rising above the throng of the crowd as everyone moves toward the temple doors and makes their way in ... the voice, louder now, continues ...

*For the Lord is the great God,
The great King above all gods.
In his hands are the depths of the earth,
and the mountain peaks belong to him.
The sea is his for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.*

Now you're in the temple's outer courts. You're excited and expectant at what the next few hours will bring. As you move toward the inner courts, another voice continues the liturgy ...

*Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;
for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture;
the flock under his care.*

What strikes you? How do you feel when you hear the word, "Come"? What will you do about the commands of the invitation – to bow down, to kneel? Spend a moment there in your imagination and express your feelings in silent prayer.

Some discussion questions:

- How is the invitation of v6-7 different from v1-5?
- How does worship (v6) differ from praise (the sum of v1-5)?
- What does bowing down or kneeling before God say about our relationship with God?
- Consider and develop your thoughts about some of the words in the verses – these are the basis for our worship
 - LORD. This is the Hebrew word Yahweh (see Exodus 3:14) – God's covenant name
 - Our. Not my.
 - Maker. Notice the capital M. This is a recognised title for God. Not only Creator of each of us, (amazing enough), but Maker of a people, through Abraham, from slavery, into a promised land, and, for us, in Christ. Reflect on this – what does it mean for us?
 - We are the people of his pasture, etc. We are sheep and this makes God our Shepherd. This is probably the most common and best loved of images to describe our relationship with God. Read some of the shepherd passages, bring out the salient points. Give thanks and worship! Ezekiel 34:11-16; Psalm 23; John 10:11-15, plus any others you think of.