

Encountering God Series Bible Study - No 1

General Introduction to Series

- A recent visitor to the church said they didn't feel as if people were engaging in worship. What do you think they meant by this? Do you agree? What does 'engaging in worship look like?
- The series is about encountering God in our worship together – what is needed if we are to encounter God as we gather together?

Session 1 – Be reconciled!

- Read Matthew 5:23-24
- Context is the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1 – 7:28)
 - How would you describe the sermon's content?
 - Who is it for?
- Immediate context is 5:17-48. Check out v18-20
 - What does Jesus say about the OT?
 - About his intention for it?
 - About our level of righteousness? How is this possible

Our verses fall in this section where Jesus wants people to respect and love others before themselves, and not just in our actions, but in our thoughts and attitudes. Read 1 John 4:20-21 and John 13:34-35 and comment on what this means for us all.

Verse 23 begins with a 'therefore' because it is a practical example of how our respect for others might be played out. The scene is probably not weekly synagogue worship, but the occasion once or twice per year when you might go to the up temple in Jerusalem to make sacrifices to get right with God. You may have walked for a few days to get there, and you may have waited a few hours before it's your turn at the altar. This makes Jesus instructions all the more amazing – and challenging. READ THE VERSES AGAIN SLOWLY, REFLECTING ON EACH WORD.

- Whose responsibility is it to take the initiative in being reconciled? Is this always fair?
- What criteria can you use (how do you know) if there is a problem between you and someone else that needs to be reconciled?
- How do you respond to these sentences that the preacher said in the sermon?
 - "Unless you're reconciled to your brother or sister, you can't encounter God."
 - "Our reconciliation is more important to God than our praises."

Read Matthew 7:21-23. Our obedience to Jesus' commands is a serious business. As we close the session, take a moment to ask God to reveal to you any relationships that aren't as good as they should be.

In case God doesn't reveal anyone to you, think about who you wouldn't invite to your next birthday party or who isn't on your Christmas card list or who you consciously try to avoid and ask yourself why. Take the initiative – be reconciled! (Be gentle, your brother or sister may not be aware of the problem).