

PART ONE  
**ENCOUNTERS**

*Meeting Jesus through His Followers*

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"To speak of a 'culture of encounter' means that we, as a people, should be passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges, planning a project that includes everyone... What is important is to create *processes* of encounter, processes that build a people that can accept differences."

(Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, #216-217)

**DO NOT REPRODUCE**



## SENT TO SERVE LEADER NOTES

### PART 1: ENCOUNTERS

#### Turn Your Meeting Room into a Sacred Space

Be assured that the atmosphere and feeling that your group will have starts before they even walk in the door. It is important you spend some time setting up the environment to ensure that participants feel welcome and are comfortable and that it focuses everyone on the sacred sharing that is about to take place.

We recommend that you start by putting the chairs in a circle or arranging the furniture in the room so that everyone can see each other easily. The circle itself creates a sense of connection immediately upon entering it. Be sure to check the technology that you are using to view the videos and songs before the meeting starts to ensure everything runs smoothly.

Next set up a coffee table or other small table in the center of your circle. Place a Bible opened to the particular Scripture that goes with each session and a lit candle on the table. Depending on your group and the availability of these items, you may want to place a palm, a bowl of holy water, or a cross on the table as well. You may also include items that are significant to your group or parish. On a side table, make sure that you have food and drink available to provide additional hospitality to your group.

Each “ELN #” Encounters (Leader Note) corresponds to the sections in the booklet.

#### Strategies for Facilitating Your Group

##### ELN 1 The Name Game

- » Starting with the Group Leader, ask each person to say their name.
- » After a person has said their name, ask the group to repeat it in unison. (The repetition of the name reinforces it in the participants’ memories.)

- » After going around the circle once with names, add this element of challenge: Pick a person to start by saying their name.
- » Next go to the person seated next to them and ask them to say the name they just heard and then their own name.
- » The following person then has to say the previous two names before saying their own. Follow this pattern until the last person says all the names in the circle.
- » If at any point you see fear or reluctance on the part of someone in the circle, offer them the opportunity to “start over.” This means they only have to say their own name. The person seated next to them then starts the pattern over starting with the name of the person next to them only.

##### ELN 2 Opening Activities

These experiential activities are optional, but we highly encourage you to use them with your group for these reasons:

1. These activities are designed to get the participants thinking about the topic for that week’s session. For example, in Session 1, we are focusing on Mary’s “Yes” to God and how we are also called to say “Yes” to God’s call in our lives. The chorus of “yeses” will provide a fun and engaging introduction and highlight for participants after they go home for the week.
2. While some of the activities may seem a bit simple, they are designed to invite the group to laughter and playful discussion. During the large group discussion and the small group discipling portions of the session, participants will share from the heart. The experiential activities provide the counterbalance and sense of fun that coupled with the deeper sharing creates a truly connected community within your group.

**ENCOUNTERS****ELN 2A Session 1: "Say YES!"**

- » Read these statements to the group; then ask them to shout "Yes" when they agree.
- » As the Group Leader, periodically comment on these "yes" statements. For example, for those participants who say "Yes" to the statement about cooking, follow up with "What do you like to cook?" etc.

**"Yes" Statements:**

- Summer is better than winter...
  - Being on the water is my favorite place to be...
  - I love to cook...
  - Weekends are better than weekdays...
  - God is good...all the time...
- » Point out that this chorus of "yeses" will get us ready to think about Mary's "Yes" to the angel Gabriel.

**ELN 2B Session 2: "Rock, Paper, Scissors!"**

- » Tell the group that, in this session, "We will discover that Peter's love wins over his fear. To get us thinking about that, we're going to play a few rounds of "Rock, Paper, Scissors" with the person next to you. (Partner up!) Remember, Rock wins over Scissors, Paper wins over Rock, and Scissors wins over Paper! Are you ready? Begin..."
- » Let the participants play for a minute or two, enjoying the fun and the laughter. Then move to the Scripture for this session.

**ELN 2C Session 3: "Beloved"**

- » This activity is designed to get participants thinking about the meaning of the word "beloved" before discussing John the Beloved.
- » Ask the group, "What are some other words that mean 'beloved'?"
- » When participants respond, ask them follow up questions like "How so?" or "What makes you choose that word?"

**ELN 2D Session 4: "Our Voices"**

- » Say to the group, "Mary Magdalene recognized Jesus' voice when he called her name. Do we recognize each other's voices?"
- » Divide the circle of participants in half.
- » Ask one half of the circle to close their eyes.
- » Invite an individual participant who has their eyes open (by pointing or gesturing non-verbally to them) to call the name of someone who has their eyes closed.
- » Then ask the person with their eyes closed to guess who called their name. Try this several times with different participants.
- » Whether the participants guess right or wrong, keep a light tone to this exercise—it will lead to laughter and joy!

**ELN 2E Session 5: "A New Perspective"**

- » Tell the group, "Zacchaeus had to climb a tree to see Jesus, giving him a different perspective on life, literally and spiritually!"
- » Invite the participants to move to a different chair in the circle, or a different place in the room, or to stand on their chair, or lie on the floor, or turn around, or do anything to change their perspective! If participants have difficulty moving around or your meeting room is not conducive to movement, encourage participants to turn their heads and look in a different direction to see what they can see from a new perspective.
- » Ask for responses to the question: "What new things do you see from this perspective?"

**ELN 2F Session 6: "Two Extremes"**

Invite the participants to move to one side of the room or the other based on their preferences to the following questions. For example, make the right side of the room for those who prefer dogs and the left side of the room for those who prefer cats.

- Dogs or cats?
- Spicy or mild food?
- Comedies or dramas?

- Big cities or small towns?
  - Crunchy or smooth peanut butter?
  - Camping or a hotel?
- » If participants have difficulty moving or your meeting room is not conducive to movement, ask participants to point to one side of the room or the other based on their preferences.
- » At the end of the activity, tell participants, “Before his conversion, Paul saw things in extremes of right or wrong, but let’s learn about how God changed Paul’s mind and his life.”

### ELN 3 Videos

You will need a media device/player for these sessions. All videos needed for these sessions are available in the “Parish Pack” that includes the “NOOMA” DVDs. The videos may be available from other sources online, but this cannot be guaranteed and there may be ads.

### ELN 4 Small Group Discipling—Cluster Sharing

Before giving any instructions, ask participants to form groups of two or three, and, if possible, to move their chairs so that they are sitting in smaller circles “knee to knee.” If you are in a space where moving chairs is not feasible, simply instruct the group to turn to their partners. The goal of this is that each group focuses only on each other and not on others around them. Explain that they will be sharing with each other their own stories. Give the group verbal cues for timing. For example, say, “I am going to give you 10 minutes to talk. Each person should be given three minutes to share his or her story. I will help you with this timing. You only need to focus on sharing and listening to each other’s stories.” After three and six minutes, announce, “You should be finishing up with the first person and moving on to the second (third) person’s sharing.” This process is to help ensure that all participants get a chance to speak and be heard.

### ELN 5 Small Group Discipling—Reporting Out

When each group has finished sharing, call the participants back to the large group. Ask them to move their

chairs back into the large circle as a way of refocusing the group on the whole. Ask groups to share some insight that came from listening to each other’s stories. Not all groups will need to share. Ask one person to write the insights on a large piece of newsprint or a whiteboard. If these are not available, it works just to repeat what each group said to emphasize each point. Help the group to identify any patterns, common experiences, or insights that emerge from this sharing.

### ELN 6 Songs

Before the session, search for the song title and artist (listed at the end of the session) on YouTube, or your preferred streaming platform, and have it ready to play for the group.

### ELN 7 At the end of Session 6: Optional Treat

- » In the Rob Bell video “Tomato,” he includes a recipe for making tomato salsa. For a fun conclusion to Part 1, make tomato salsa for your group to enjoy with tortilla chips at the end of the session.
- » Recipe:
- Put ingredients in the blender in this order:
    - \* 1 chopped jalapeño pepper, seed removed (leave the seeds in it if you really like it hot!)
    - \* 1 small to medium yellow onion, cut into quarters
    - \* 1 handful of cilantro
    - \* 8 Roma tomatoes, cut into quarters
    - \* 1 squeeze of lime
    - \* 1 generous pinch of sea salt
  - Blend just until the tomatoes start to get blended. You want the tomatoes to still be chunky and not pureed.
  - Pour into a bowl and enjoy with chips.
- » Celebrate your group’s transformation!