



# ALIVE

ENCOUNTERS

PREACHING SERIES BRIEF

# **WELCOME TO THE ALIVE: ENCOUNTERS PREACHING SERIES BRIEF**

## **What is ALIVE Encounters?**

ALIVE: Encounters invites the younger generations to come on a journey to meet the real risen Jesus through the encounters He had with young people and young adults post rising from the dead. We know a generation is looking for hope for the future, and we believe this can be found in encountering Jesus!

## **Who is it for?**

Younger people aged 11-25 years old

Youth Groups, Uni's, YA groups, Schools, Online

Grabbing hold of the moment of Easter to invite them into an encounter with the real risen Jesus, through the encounters people had with him post-resurrection. Although not limited to just use at Easter as each part meets different felt needs: love, peace, hope, freedom and purpose.

## **Content**

The following brief is designed as an outline for a six-part teaching/preaching series to help guide your preparation. It provides an outline for each talk within the ALIVE: Encounters series, including the suggested title, Bible passage, structure, content, some application points, and ways people can respond. These notes are intended as a starting point for message preparation, and speakers are encouraged to make each talk their own, adding their own illustrations and playing around with the structure.

Within the ALIVE series, we are especially conscious of the need to make all youth or young adult event teaching/preaching as accessible as possible for people who may not have personally encountered the risen Jesus yet but are open and exploring faith with us. Additionally, we aim to encourage and minister to our younger church members/community, on the life-transforming power of His resurrection in a fresh way, with the hope of increasing their confidence in the Gospel.

Join us to take your group on a journey of discovery to see that Jesus being alive has a profound impact on us today – it changes everything!

# **SESSION ONE: TRANSFORMED BY LOVE**

**SCRIPTURE: JOHN 20:1-18**

## **Introduction**

Options: use the ALIVE Encounters trailer, the intro to the film series, hosting before the message, or as a brief opener for the message.

## **Attention**

Ask the questions... [maybe do a show of hands... encourage honest answers no judgment here]

- Do you think Jesus lived on earth?
- Do you think he died on a cross?
- Do you think he rose from the dead?
- Do you think he is God?

Why does any of this matter?

Series set-up – three key themes:

Jesus is alive

We can come alive (now) – especially as we experience new Love, Hope, Peace, Freedom, Purpose

We will come alive (then)

## **#1. Our Need for Love**

Personal Connection – story of 'love'

Different types of love – land on 'agape' – unconditional love of God – a primary key to feeling truly ALIVE!

Illustration: Friends - Ross and Rachel need love and the answer was right in front of them

## **#2. A Love that Frees Like No Other**

Ask – what do we think the truest kind of love looks and feels like? [roam around with the microphone or just ask the group to shout out]

Brief backstory about Mary Magdalene – emphasising the fact that she was someone seriously oppressed (7 demons). Met Jesus and was set free – a whole new sense of identity, belonging and purpose.

Application – Jesus' love is like no other – He alone can meet our deepest needs, and free us through the power of His unconditional love.

### **#3. A Love that Overcomes Like No Other**

Mary – sees Jesus die and his body laid in the tomb (she was a witness to both of these key facts). Overwhelming sense of grief at the loss of the One who loved her so. Yet Easter Sunday morning – a number of indicators that things have turned:

Darkness turns to light (dawn).

Stone rolled away

Jesus' body gone

Testimony of angels (other gospels) - He is not dead, He's risen!

Application – there is a love that is stronger than death. Death is not the end for Jesus, nor for us who follow Jesus – we will experience His love now and forever!

### **#4. A Love that Transforms Like No Other**

Jesus comes to Mary. Initially, she doesn't recognise him (gardener), until He calls her name "Mary". She clings to Him, He talks about His coming ascension and calls her to be the first 'witness' – i.e. she was transformed all over again!

Illustration: Nelson Mandela was transformed by God's love to not hate anymore but choose peace and love.

Application – because Jesus is Alive (and has ascended), we can experience His risen presence through the power of His Spirit. Like Mary, if we seek Him, He will reveal Himself to us – in a way that is personal to us.

### **Response / Appeal**

Invite those who are seekers or feel distant, to come to Jesus

Encourage everyone to come on the rest of the journey – and to expect to encounter His love in a new way

Prayer activity option: <https://prayerspacesinschools.com/resources/covid-love-is-bigger-than-fear/>

Come back next week

Go to a group (watch the videos/experience community)

# **SESSION TWO: SURPRISED BY HOPE**

**SCRIPTURE: LUKE 24:13-35**

## **Introduction**

### **Attention**

what was one of your dreams when you were younger as a kid? Did it happen? We hope for certain things - maybe even dream. But there is one person we can put our hope in completely.

One of the primary keys to being 'fully alive' is to have our HOPE restored.

Some connecting point with the congregation – e.g. via personal story or illustration concerning the importance of Hope.

Different Types of Hope:

Vague Hope

Optimistic Hope

Resilient Hope

Living Hope – based on the resurrection. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..." (1 Peter 1:3-4).

Set up or link back to Emmaus Story – a journey of hope lost and restored.

Discovery of living hope.

Backstory - 2 travellers leaving Jerusalem on Easter Sunday afternoon – thinking all is lost; Jesus joins them on the journey – they don't recognize Him. Specific story with broad application for all of us in finding living Hope. Reminder that Jesus is still Alive, and now with us spiritually.

3 keys to experience 'living Hope':

### **#1. Open Our Hearts: Jesus Meets Us in Our Disappointment**

That thing we hope for, that maybe has disappointed Jesus can fulfil more than that ever could.

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick" (Prov. 13:12). Briefly unpack the theme of disappointment e.g. personal story.

Relate to Emmaus story and pick up on the 'we had hoped' phrase. Highlight that in this story God had a better plan. Even when things don't work out as we hope in this life, we have the promise of an eternal hope.

Application – even when things don't work out as we hoped for, Jesus comes to us and wants to meet us in our disappointment. So, let's open our hearts to him.

## **#2. Open Our Bibles: God Speaks to Us through the Scriptures**

Ask who believes God can speak today. How? [ask for answers]

Surprising way that Jesus does and doesn't reveal Himself. He doesn't first reveal Himself personally but rather points to what the Scriptures say about Him. Worth briefly unpacking here the way that Jesus validates the Bible, and the Bible ultimately points to Him.

Application – this is still a primary way that Jesus reveals Himself to us – through the Scriptures. Invitation for new people to start reading the Bible (give practical tips); and for existing believers to delve deeper and with expectancy that we will meet with Jesus through the Scriptures.

## **#3. Open Our Lives: Jesus Comes where He is Welcomed**

Illustration: quote about Aslan - "Aslan is a lion- the Lion, the great Lion." "Ooh" said Susan. "I'd thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion"..."Safe?" said Mr Beaver... "Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you." C.S. Lewis - relate to the Narnia films...

We get to welcome the King of Kings to help us and make us whole  
Even with the presence of Jesus, and the Scriptures, disciples still could have missed Him. Hence the significance of them inviting Him into their home – where, through a meal and breaking bread, their eyes are opened.  
Application – the importance of us personally welcoming Jesus into our lives.

## **Response**

Start with an invitation for everyone (seekers or believers) to welcome Jesus into their lives – in a fresh way

Pray for all who are experiencing disappointment – encourage them to offer this to the Lord – maybe pray Romans 15:13 over them.

Conclude with some encouragement that even when things don't work out in this life, we have a hope that is forever – something that will be further unpacked in Session 2 of the Video series.

Prayer Activity Option:

<https://prayerspacesinschools.com/resources/i-have-a-dream/>

Encourage everyone to...

- Come back next week
- Go to a group (watch the videos/experience community)

# **SESSION THREE: FILLED WITH PEACE**

**SCRIPTURE: JOHN 20:19-29**

## **Introduction**

### **Attention**

Ask when I say 'peace' what comes to mind to you?

Our longing for peace and wellbeing. Personal story and/or stats. Holistic wellbeing – and concept of the dashboard.

Biblical wellbeing is expressed in the idea of 'shalom' (OT) and 'eirene' (NT). God's Plan – possibly show a diagram.

Link to Bible passage – two incidents – one week apart – in both occasions – Jesus comes into the midst of the disciples – and speaks 'peace' to them.

Read John 20:19-23

### **#1. Receive the Peace that is greater than our fears**

Highlight – double announcement of peace here – more than just a greeting, but a declaration that the Prince of Peace has triumphed and is present in their midst...

a. Frees us from our Fears

What fears are there in this room?

Disciples – living in fear (vs. 19-20). Obvious link to how we all face many fears (worth unpacking). Into the midst of this, Jesus, came, speaking a word of 'Peace' and showing Himself fully alive.

Application – invite the Prince of Peace to come, reveal Himself to us and free us from our fears.

b. Empowers us for our Purpose

Second proclamation of peace is accompanied by Jesus commissioning them and breathing the Spirit on them. It's as if, having given them peace for themselves, they are now to go and proclaim this true message of peace to a broken world, that needs reconciling to the Creator (notice the emphasis on forgiveness). The breathing of the Spirit is a sign of the new life and the new power that they are to receive.

Story: Jackie Pullinger had a similar experience with Jesus and decided to move to the other side of the world as a lone missionary in China, into the most dangerous city in the world. She brought peace because she was filled with the Holy Spirit [could show a video clip of her].

Application – receive the Spirit, in order to fulfil our true purpose in the world (signpost to Session 5 on purpose).

2nd incident a week later – read John 20:24-29

## **#2. Receive the Peace that is greater than our doubts**

Reflect - on a time you didn't believe something because you couldn't understand it.

Brief background on Thomas – missed the first meeting! Clearly, someone who wanted physical evidence and signs. Briefly unpack the whole issue of doubt.

Jesus appears again with another proclamation of peace, this time specifically addressing Thomas' doubts. (Significant that Jesus directly addresses what Thomas has verbalised, highlighting that He's alive and present, even when we don't see Him!).

Jesus graciously invites Thomas to see and touch. Thomas responds with his magnificent declaration: "My Lord and my God". Jesus' response is very significant for Thomas and for us: "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (vs. 29).

Application – importance of true faith (the word 'believe' appears six times in vs. 24-31). This true faith (believing without seeing), is more than just intellectual assent, it's even more than trusting in Jesus – it's a commitment of our whole lives to him.

### **Response**

Invite the risen Jesus to come to You – to free you from your fears and your doubts, and to fill you with His Spirit.

Prayer Activity Option: <https://prayerspacesinschools.com/resources/bubble-wrap-prayers/>

Come back – two more sessions – freedom and purpose.

# **SESSION FOUR: LIVING IN FREEDOM**

**SCRIPTURE: JOHN 21**

## **Introduction**

### **Attention**

Get a jar, place an orange in it, and make sure it is a jar where if you put your fist in it then you can get it out with the orange in your hand...

The orange is available but somehow we can't free it from the jar, Jesus comes and breaks the jar so we are completely free not just an illusion of freedom

Highlight the universal longing for freedom – focus in on the importance of us being free on the inside – in the present, from our past, for the future.

Set-up story of Simon Peter – brief recap of his 'failures', majoring on his thrice denial of Jesus. Yet within a few weeks of this incident, he's there on the Day of Pentecost – the first leader of the new church, and someone who is still celebrated today.

What happened? 1. He encountered the risen Jesus. 2. He was freed, forgiven and restored by Jesus. Hence, there is hope for us all: "Your future is greater than your failure; the call is greater than the fall!"

### **#1. Freedom from Past Frustration (vs. 1-14)**

Personal illustration, connecting points about the frustration when things aren't working!

Briefly connect with the story of Peter and the other 6 disciples – fishing, all night, caught nothing. Yet into this picture of frustration, Jesus comes to them, instructs them, they obey Him and experience the miraculous catch of fish. They go ashore and receive His invitation to 'come and have breakfast'.

Application – Jesus is alive and willing to help (He knows more about life than we do); we have to obey His instructions; let the 'miracles' draw us closer to the 'miracle-maker'.

John 20:15-17

### **#2. Freedom from Past Failure**

We have all failed – many times! But don't need to be held back from the consequences of past failure – Simon Peter is the supreme example of this.

Highlight how Jesus helped Peter face up to what had happened in order to free him – charcoal fire, 3 times asking 'do you love me?', mirroring Peter 3 times denying Him. Jesus loves us enough to go to the root of our sin and failure – in order that we might be truly forgiven.

Application – open up to Jesus – invite Him to speak to you about areas of past sin and failure – and receive his forgiveness and freedom.

### **#3. Freedom for Future Purpose**

Focus on how for Peter, it looked like his whole future (as a disciple and a leader) was over. Yet, Jesus not only forgave him and freed him from his past failure he recommissioned him for his future calling as a shepherd of God's people. Again note the 3-fold commission: "feed my lambs...take care of my sheep...feed my sheep". The early chapters of Acts and the early church history show us how stunningly effective this restoration and recommissioning was.

(If time – you could include a brief conclusion on the whole theme of comparison. Jesus lovingly confronts Peter for his all-too-human response of comparing his future to 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' – see vs. 18-23).

Illustration: share story of Lily Meschi who came to faith in Iran from a Muslim background

Application – receive fresh words of restoration and recommissioning. (Get free from the comparison trap).

### **Response**

Invite Jesus to come and free you – past, present and future

Prayer Activity Option: <https://prayerspacesinschools.com/resources/freedom/>

Encouragement – final session next week on Purpose.

# **SESSION FIVE: FULFILLING OUR PURPOSE**

**SCRIPTURE: ACTS 9:1-9**

## **Introduction**

### **Attention**

Discuss with people around us, who or what did we want to be when we were older  
Connecting points on the importance of purpose and why we all need a 'reason for being' in order to feel fully alive.

All at different points. It may be that right now you are

Living with a Lack of Purpose

Living with a Misguided Purpose

The great news today is that we can all go on a journey of finding and fulfilling our true purpose.

Example of Saul of Tarsus who became Paul. Some who had a very misguided sense of purpose, and whose whole purpose was transformed by meeting the risen Jesus... three key lessons, three things we, like Saul, need:

### **#1. A Transformed Motivation**

Brief background to Saul – persecution of the followers of Jesus. Likelihood of him being 'convicted' that something was wrong (see Acts 26:14b).

Brief link to the story – a real encounter with the risen, glorified Jesus – which led to him falling to the ground, and being blinded. (Not just a vision – light and a voice). Significance of this encounter, because of his outright hostility to Jesus and His followers. Led to a completely transformed motivation – the greatest proponent of Christianity.

Story - share your testimony of coming to faith

Application – Jesus is Alive. We can now encounter Jesus by His Spirit. As we do, He will begin to change our motivation.

### **#2. An Eternal Perspective**

Living just for this current life is short-sighted and ultimately futile. Paul is one of the best sources for what our future life will look like – which frees us from the fear of death and fills us with the hope of resurrection life.

Worth briefly unpacking in this final message the 'transformed physicality' (Tom Wright) of our future beyond death – a future that means that, like Jesus, we will receive new resurrection bodies, and we will live in a new creation (heaven on earth).

Application – Rather than providing an escapist mentality, this eternal perspective, helps us make the most of our current lives, in serving God's purposes (see 1 Corinthians 15:58). This new freedom from the fear of death and eternal hope, gives us the confidence to make the most of our lives right now. (This gives a link to point 3).

### **#3. Discovering our Unique Life Pathway**

As well as recognising our overall life purpose, each of us needs to go on a journey of discovering our specific life pathway. Example of Paul – a unique calling.

Application – briefly cf. to practical keys to discovering one's unique life pathway –  
Recognise Your Uniqueness

Take a Holistic Approach

Go on a Journey of Discovery

Receive Ongoing Guidance and Strength.

### **Response**

Final invitation – receive Jesus and His purpose for your life.

Prayer Activity Option: <https://prayerspacesinschools.com/resources/letters-from-god/>

Ongoing exhortation – to keep journeying with Jesus – to pray, to read your Bible, to stay