



LIVING THE
FAITH

Prayer Experience: On the Road to Emmaus

A Retreat Resource for Small Groups

A favorite Scripture passage about people on journey is the story of the Road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35). This post-resurrection narrative takes place between two disheartened travelers who are leaving Jerusalem. While they walk along the way, they are accompanied by a man whom they do not recognize. They share with him all that they have experienced in the previous days. He listens to them, and in return, he breaks open the Scriptures to them. They are so enamored by his presence that they invite him to stay. As they share a meal together, he blesses the bread which they are about to share, and they recognize him as Jesus, the Risen One.

The story of Emmaus reminds us that Jesus meets us while we are on pilgrimage, too. Specifically, Jesus meets us in conversation with one another. As people walk together, in pairs, encourage them to share stories about their faith journey, their life story, their struggles, and their own encounters with Christ throughout their lives. Encourage them to trust that Jesus meets them in their journey with one another and that Jesus wants to share his story with us as well.

NOTE TO LEADERS: Arrange the group in pairs of two people each. It is best to do this in some random fashion, by drawing names out of a hat, or picking numbers. You may want to create small cards that have the discussion questions listed on them so that partners can remember them and refer to them more easily while walking. Read the scripture story of The Road to Emmaus together (Lk 24:13-35). Invite a member of the group to read the passage, while the others listen.

OPENING EXPLANATION

Leader:

The story of the Road to Emmaus reminds us that Jesus meets us while we are on pilgrimage. No matter the destination, Jesus encounters us when we are on the road. Jesus meets us in our conversations with one another. Jesus meets us in our walking and in our resting. Jesus meets us when we reflect in our minds and hearts about our experiences. Most importantly, Jesus wants to meet us to share his story with us, so that it might transform us. You have each been given a partner to journey with. Take some time to walk and talk together. We invite you to share a story about your life with one another. This could be the story of your faith journey. It could be another important story from your life. Just as the pilgrims on the road to Emmaus encountered Jesus as they walked and talked, we hope you discover Jesus' presence as you share your stories with one another.

CONVERSATIONS & QUESTIONS

Remember that Jesus is always with you on the journey.

- If Jesus were walking with you, how would he respond to your stories?
- What would he celebrate with you? What would he challenge you on?
- What would he want to share with you?



THE ROAD TO EMMAUS STORY

Luke 24:13-35

That very day, the first day of the week,
two of Jesus' disciples were going
to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus,
and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred.
And it happened that while they were conversing and debating,
Jesus himself drew near and walked with them,
but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.
He asked them,
"What are you discussing as you walk along?"
They stopped, looking downcast.
One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply,
"Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem
who does not know of the things
that have taken place there in these days?"
And he replied to them, "What sort of things?"
They said to him,
"The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene,
who was a prophet mighty in deed and word
before God and all the people,
how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over
to a sentence of death and crucified him.
But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel;
and besides all this,
it is now the third day since this took place.
Some women from our group, however, have astounded us:
they were at the tomb early in the morning
and did not find his body;
they came back and reported
that they had indeed seen a vision of angels
who announced that he was alive.
Then some of those with us went to the tomb
and found things just as the women had described,
but him they did not see."
And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are!



How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke!
Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things
and enter into his glory?"

Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets,
he interpreted to them what referred to him
in all the Scriptures.

As they approached the village to which they were going,
he gave the impression that he was going on farther.

But they urged him, "Stay with us,
for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over."

So he went in to stay with them.

And it happened that, while he was with them at table,
he took bread, said the blessing,
broke it, and gave it to them.

With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him,
but he vanished from their sight.

Then they said to each other,

"Were not our hearts burning within us
while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?"

So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem
where they found gathered together

the eleven and those with them who were saying,

"The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!"

Then the two recounted

what had taken place on the way

and how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread.

ARRIVAL AT THE DESTINATION

In Luke's Gospel, the destination was seemingly the place where the encounter experience was shared; but ultimately, Jesus was present throughout the journey along the road to Emmaus, not just at the end. Regardless of what is shared, it is important to keep the spirit of confidentiality with one's walking partner by sharing one's own feelings and thoughts rather than those expressed by others

(without permission to do so). It is important for leaders to remind their group of this expectation. Encourage participants to be open to hearing each other's stories, to be a listener more than speaker, and to train themselves to recognize God in the lives and moments of others, and in their own lives.