## Cleophas and Companion

*That same day two of Jesus' disciples were going to the village of Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. As they were talking and thinking about what had happened, Jesus came near and started walking along beside them. But they did not know who he was.*

*Jesus asked them, "What were you talking about as you walked along?" The two of them stood there looking sad and gloomy. Then the one named Cleopas asked Jesus, "Are you the only person from Jerusalem who didn't know what was happening there these last few days?"*

*"What do you mean?" Jesus asked. They answered: Those things that happened to Jesus from Nazareth. By what he did and said he showed that he was a powerful prophet, who pleased God and all the people. Then the chief priests and our leaders had him arrested and sentenced to die on a cross. We had hoped that he would be the one to set Israel free! But it has already been three days since all this happened. Some women in our group surprised us. They had gone to the tomb early in the morning, but did not find the body of Jesus. They came back, saying that they had seen a vision of angels who told them that he is alive. Some men from our group went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said. But they didn't see Jesus either.*

*Then Jesus asked the two disciples, "Why can't you understand? How can you be so slow to believe all that the prophets said? Didn't you know that the Messiah would have to suffer before he was given his glory?" Jesus then explained everything written about himself in the Scriptures, beginning with the Law of Moses and the Books of the Prophets. When the two of them came near the village where they were going, Jesus seemed to be going farther. They begged him, "Stay with us! It's already late, and the sun is going down." So Jesus went into the house to stay with them.*

*After Jesus sat down to eat, he took some bread. He blessed it and broke it. Then he gave it to them. At once they knew who he was, but he disappeared. They said to each other, "When he talked with us along the road and explained the Scriptures to us, didn't it warm our hearts?" So they got right up and returned to Jerusalem.*

*The two disciples found the eleven apostles and the others gathered together. And they learned from the group that the Lord was really alive and had appeared to Peter. Then the disciples from Emmaus told what happened on the road and how they knew he was the Lord when he broke the bread.*

Luke 24: 13-25

## Background

This story shows that Jesus has a divine sense of humor! The narrative describes the glorious day of the resurrection. Jesus shared the Good News with the women and then the disciples.

Later, Jesus took a journey with two lesser-known disciples. He walked with them and yet they never recognized him. They hearts were heavy. They did not realize they were talking with the Risen Lord!

The Bible is filled with references to times when people unexpectedly encountered angels or special messengers from God.

* Abraham and Sarah entertained three heavenly travelers (Genesis 18).
* God spoke to Moses from a burning bush (Exodus 3).
* An angel appeared to Gideon and commissioned him to fight a mighty battle (Judges 6).
* An angel appeared to Mary and announced the messiah’s birth. (Luke 1: 26-38).

Cleopas left town before the Good News was announced. Tradition indicates his wife was the other disciple. Jesus reached out to the two wanderers and decided to have a little fun. He asked why they were so sad. They were amazed! They asked if he was the only person from Jerusalem who did not know what had been happening! Jesus knew it all.

It’s human nature to think we have all the answers. The couple on the road to Emmaus was missing the most important part of the Easter story. They could have learned the truth from Jesus but they weren’t paying attention. They talked more than they listened.

The party reached Emmaus and Jesus indicated he was traveling further. The couple asked him to stay and be their guest. Jesus accepted the invitation. In a moment of divine irony, the guest became the host. Jesus took the bread, he blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them. In that moment they realized who he was, and then he was gone.

Jesus used the very same words and actions when he fed the five thousand (Luke 9: 16) and presided at the Last Supper (Luke 22:19). These four verbs (take, bless, break, give) are Jesus’ holy signature. In these moments, the disciples were spiritually fed and the couple was so moved by the revelation of the Risen Lord that they immediately set out for Jerusalem.

**Message**

An unusual study points out that there are plenty of good reasons to attend church:

* 20% of all fatal accidents happen in auto crashes.
* 17% of all fatal accidents occur in the home.
* 16% of all fatal accidents involve some form of public transport (planes, trains and boats).
* 14% of all fatal accidents involve pedestrians on streets and sidewalks.
* Only .001% of all fatal accidents occur in worship at church. Logically the safest place at any time is at church! Bible studies are also safe. The percentages are even less!

The first sign of a spiritual setback is separation from the community of believers. Cleophas and companion chose not to remain in Jerusalem with the other disciples. They handled their loss by leaving town.

Contemporary Biblical author Frederick Buechner asserts that Emmaus is a type of place that people go to escape (shopping center, movie, nightclub, cave) when they are frustrated and cannot find answers they are seeking. Emmaus is the way of seeking worldly answers. Emmaus may promise us momentary relief, but can never give us lasting joy.

The disciples who stayed in Jerusalem offered comfort to one another. Fellowships of believers read Scriptures together, share cares and concerns, break bread, and know that Christ is present. The Emmaus couple finally realized their mistake of leaving their faith community. They hurried back.

Christians are called into community. We are commanded to love *each other*, pray for *each other*, encourage *each other*, admonish *each other*, greet *each other*, serve *each other*, teach *each other*, accept *each other*, honor *each other*, bear *each other*’s burdens, forgive *each other*, submit to *each other*, and be devoted to *each other*.

God’s presence is never meant to be a private gift. The experience should be shared. The church is a gift from Christ. Together:

* Jesus “takes” us to a fellowship of all believers;
* Jesus “blesses” us with a message of love;
* Jesus’ message “breaks” down those things that would divide us; and
* Jesus “gives” us back to the world to share his message of salvation.

We are the body of Christ. Jesus is the bread of life. He sends us into the world to feed others and welcome them into his holy church. The world is filled with those who are lost, filled with sadness. We are called to join them on their roads to “Emmaus” and show them a better way.

Sometimes the best method to get anywhere is to stay put. Jesus assures us “Whenever two or three of you come together (*in worship*) in my name, as my followers, I am there with you” (Matthew 18:20). After all, Jesus *is* the way, the truth, and the life (John 14: 6).

**Strength Finders talent: Relator**

[**https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/252311/relator-theme.aspx**](https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/252311/relator-theme.aspx)

Relators have the very special gift of quality relationships. Other talents contribute to making new friends, but relators can make existing relationships last. Quality over quantity.

This couple must have had a powerful and meaningful relationship with Jesus. They must have been heartbroken and confused by the great loss that happened during Holy Week. Their first response is escape. That was probably the worst thing they could have done. People who need people need people. They may have left God’s people behind, but God did not forsake them.

We can all have a tendency to hide our pains and struggles. This strength teaches us the importance of not going it alone. Caring communities that work through struggles together (personal or worldly struggles); do better than those who do not.

God has created us in a way that we need each other. God calls us into meaningful committed covenant communities. The early disciples were such a group. The came together in loss and pain and found peace, reconciliation, and true joy.

**Enneagram connections: Seven**

This is type of person who can sometimes seek personal pleasure as a means of distraction from the discomfort, depression, darkness, and other downsides of life. The Emmaus couple may have thought they were escaping the difficulties in Jerusalem, but they were really running away from the solution to their problems.

Out west they say that people can be cattle or buffalo in times of struggle. Cows get confused during thunderstorms on the open plains. They try to run away and get confused. Many parishes. Buffalo run towards the storm together. Together they quickly pass through the crisis. Together they survive and thrive.

Jesus reaches out to the couple and helps restore their place in the caring community. We in turn are encouraged to seek those who have lost their way. We build more meaningful relationships when we can truly be there for each other. This helps creates authentic communities filled with God’s love. This is the true home they were seeking.

*28“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”* Matthew 11

[**https://cpenneagram.com/enneagram-type-seven**](https://cpenneagram.com/enneagram-type-seven)

## Questions

1. Baptist Rev Dr John Fawcett served the same church for many years. He wrote this hymn after being tempted to move elsewhere. He stayed. His hymn speaks of burdens to bear. How can we help each other? What does it mean to be the family of God?

Blest be the tie that binds, our hearts in Christian love;

the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne we pour our ardent prayers;

our fears, our hopes, our aims are one our comforts and our cares.

We share each other's woes, our mutual burdens bear;

#### and often for each other flows the sympathizing tear. (1782)

2. What are local examples of Emmaus locations where people go to escape? How can they be reached? Who will reach them? Will you?

3. How can your church better enable you to love, pray, encourage, admonish, greet, serve, teach, accept, honor, and forgive each other? Bear each other’s burdens? Submit to each other? Be devoted to each other?

#### Two Friends

*It happened, on a solemn eventide,*

*Soon after he that was our surety died,*

*Two bosom friends, each pensively inclined,*

*The scene of all those sorrows left behind,*

*Sought their own village, busied, as they went,*

*In musings worthy of the great event:*

*They spake of him they loved, of him whose life,*

*Though blameless, had incurred perpetual strife,*

*Whose deeds had left, in spite of hostile arts,*

*A deep memorial graven on their hearts.*

*The recollection, like a vein of ore,*

*The farther traced, enriched them still the more;*

*They thought him and they justly thought him, one*

*Sent to do more than He appeared t’have done;*

*To exalt a people, and to place them high*

*Above all else, and wondered he should die.*

*Ere yet they brought their journey to an end,*

*A Stranger joined them, courteous as a friend,*

*And asked them, with a kind engaging air,*

*What their affliction was, and begged a share.*

*Informed, he gathered up the broken thread,*

*And, truth and wisdom gracing all he said,*

*Explained, illustrated, and searched so well*

*The tender theme, on which they chose to dwell,*

*That reaching home, “The night,” they said, “is near,*

*We must not now be parted, sojourn here.”*

*The new acquaintance soon became a guest,*

*And welcome at their simple feast,*

*He blessed the bread, but vanished at the word,*

*And left them both exclaiming, “Twas the Lord!*

*Did not our hearts feel all he deigned to say,*

*Did they not burn within us by the way?”*

The Walk to Emmaus, William Cowper, 1731-1800